



LONGMANS MISCELLANY  
NUMBER FOUR



# *Longmans Miscellany*

*Number Four*

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A COLLECTION  
OF POETRY, SHORT STORIES,  
ARTICLES AND PICTURES  
BY LIVING AUTHORS  
AND ARTISTS

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*Longmans Green & Co*

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## FOREWORD

LONGMANS MISCELLANY Number Four is the last of its kind. Number One, which appeared in 1943, was, in more ways than one, a war-time product. Like too many other products with similar antecedents it has continued for many months after the cessation of hostilities. Now, for various reasons, it must cease to exist.

It is possible, however, that its place may be taken by a Magazine which will appear at more frequent intervals than the Miscellanies. The publishers are at the moment negotiating with a board of editors, who are well known in the world of Literature, and they hope to bring out two issues of *No Frontiers* in the course of 1947. Full details will be published as soon as all arrangements have been completed, but anyone who wishes to may send poems, articles, short stories, drawings and paintings for consideration to :—

The Editors, NO FRONTIERS,  
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17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13,

or to any Longmans Office. All contributions will be acknowledged but none will be returned unless adequate postage is sent. Outright payment will be made, on publication, for all work accepted.

In conclusion, let us express our hope that the ashes of Longmans Miscellany will create enough warmth to hatch the egg of *No Frontiers*.

CALCUTTA,  
December, 1946.



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Reproduction of a WATER-COLOUR PAINTING by *N. S. Bendré* appears opposite page 1, by courtesy of the artist.

A PENCIL DRAWING by *Grace E. Clarke* appears opposite page 32.

PHOTOGRAPHS by "*Libra*", illustrating 'Daria Dowlat Bagh', appear between page 48 and page 49.

LINOCUTS by *L. M. Sen* appear between page 128 and page 129.

The design for the DUST JACKET is by *Jamini Roy* and the TITLE PAGE is by *Lawrence Reynolds*.





## SEEING BY SUNLIGHT, 1940

THE SUN shows up everything. Soft shadows and mild tones are not possible here. Wrinkles stand no chance in the sun—they show. If in cold countries Man has to work hard to quicken Nature, here in the tropics—and the most important part of Asia is in the tropics—he must exert himself to slow up Nature. Unaided by Man, nor for that matter opposed by him, Nature goes on full merrily in the tropics; and that is why our advantages, such as they are, owe so much to Nature. If an Eastern woman is beautiful it is not even owing so much to parentage. It is owing to a whim of Nature's. To begin with, the woman herself might recognize this gift and others might be aware of it, but she would do nothing to preserve her beauty, and those who admired her before would not be disappointed when she became fat and dowdy, or wrinkled and slattern.

A rich man or a potentate might get an impulse one day to lay a garden or build a Taj Mahal. He would go so far as to make a start: but if the garden ever becomes a reality or the monument ever completed you could be sure it would be neglected thereafter. As a rule such projects are never completed. When they are it is more due to the enthusiasm of the landscape artist or the architect, whichever of the two it happens to be. (And as his reward his patron would have him hurled from the top of his own monument, or have his eyes put out, lest he do a similar or better job elsewhere.)

Not all ruins in Asia are ruins of what was once whole. They are ruins, if you like to call them so, but actually remnants, of things that were half-begun

and left. Go through any country in Asia and you will see the foundations and walls of houses and still more ambitious edifices that were begun ambitiously and left halfway for the delectation now of the lizard and the frog and snake and spider. Left half-begun not necessarily for reasons of money: left half-begun because men give in to exhaustion only too readily in Asia. There are any number of millionaires' homes in Asia—and they are the least tastefully furnished homes, by the way—and there are armies of servants and retainers, but that the furniture should be dusted daily, or the window panes be cleaned weekly, or the paper flowers with their limp wires reposing in brass bowls, placed there years ago, be thrown away—these are things overlooked by master and mistress and servant alike. Collection without selection is the motto of the Newrich of Asia—and the collections gather dust and cobwebs.

This is the psychology of Asia, and you must know it if you are to understand Asiatics, if you are to grow indulgent to the comic figures they cut ('The Englishmen were tall—thin; whereas most of the natives, garbed in silks and jewels, were short and plump. The natives all looked very shy, and it seemed strange and sad that they should fit less easily into these surroundings than those gossiping English ladies who were stalking to and fro like noisy pink flamingoes.'—from the description of the Maharajah's Ball in *The Asiatics*)—and to the comic opera that is public life in all Asia from Teheran to Tokio, from Lhassa to Devinuvara, or the City of the Gods (pronounced by English-speaking natives of Ceylon as Dondra), the southernmost point in Ceylon.

This psychology enters into every shade of life. 'Give in, give in,' says the Asiatic heart all the time, beneath however proud and defiant an exterior. In Asia Nature knows of that eventual surrender and waits and watches, in no way perturbed by Man's grandiose schemes. She has timed, in the light of past experience, the moment of his surrender. Not realizing his own weakness and supineness he credits Nature with all

kinds of imaginary powers. He thinks of her as malevolent—if benevolent, only spasmodically—and thus he propitiates mountain and river, stone and tree, anything that is the least bit freakish and capable of being worshipped.

It is this readiness for surrender that has sapped the very masculinity of the Asiatic man. In the course of centuries he has developed certain originally female attributes; and the women have in no way despised the men for this. It has brought about an easy-going state of affairs providing a certain psychological satisfaction to the women and obviating those demands on men which in a more striving-and-achieving society men consider to be natural demands on them.

Sexual relationship: to take an instance. There is a greater proportion of Asiatic husbands who have no thought for the emotional reactions and sexual needs of their wives than there are American and European husbands. There is no apologizing or feeling apologetic on the part of the husbands for their shortcomings, for they do not admit these. (It is not the man who is impotent but the woman who is barren.) When sexual gratification is prolonged it is not through consideration for the woman, but from a not-to-be-resisted virility in the man. Nor must one imagine that a dissatisfied Oriental wife thinks of a lover or other satisfaction. When her mountain of fat or her seedy weakling of a husband, as the case may be, collapses exhausted on her bosom she is quite indulgent to him, for in that moment she appropriates some of his masculinity, and he acknowledges her superiority. Thus the concern of his spouse, like that of the domineering wives of weak-willed curates, is quite genuine. While as types they are universal, there has been a cult of them in Asia.

There is therefore some truth, as far as Asia is concerned, in that the hand that rules is the hand that rocks the cradle. Women in the East are content to remain slaves because from that status, which arouses no suspicion, they can extract certain psychological satisfactions. And in keeping women

as slaves, in subjection as it is spoken of, men have not become more mannish but have partaken of definitely womanly qualities. One can go into Hindu mythology (the 'sacred' *linga*, phallus, does not show the male and female organs as separate), or into the philosophy of the *In* and *Yo*, or the *Yin* and *Yang*, to prove this flux. This is as it should be, and not be a matter for criticism but that in Asia the males are heavily in debt to the women. And this is more true of India than of any other Asiatic country. One has only to look at South Indian men, particularly in the Brahmin caste, or among the Malayalis, to find men who need very little make-up for them to be able to impersonate women.

Thus we come to those peculiar weapons of the East, one of which, under the term *Satyagraha* as coined by Gandhi, has now passed into current usage. Self-immolation, penance, is only a brand of masochism. To justify yourself and prove the other man wrong by your undergoing a penalty, having of course duly published your intentions, is only a degree removed from some tribal ordeal by fire to prove your innocence. But in its more 'refined' practice in Asia there is not so much appealing to another's conscience as telling yourself what a guiltless fellow you are. And all over Asia, particularly in India and Ceylon, you find this seemingly unviolent form of coercion which was originally, and still is, a feminine weapon to obtain redress.

Parents who refuse food in order to bring erring children to a sense of filial duty, creditors who sit upon your doorstep and vow to die there unless you pay your debts, and (since Gandhi, borrowing from the late MacSwiney the technique of it and popularizing it) patriots who threaten their governments with suicide—all this is an old primitive technique which has been brought to perfection in Asia. As I say, it is a womanly technique, and the readiness with which men adopt it proves how far gone and how little suspected the 'feminizing' metamorphosis in Asia is.

Psychologically, the general result is very demoralizing, and very 'un-manning', characterized by a childish inclination to take what is given, to ask for more of what has been given and been found to be tasty, to put the responsibility for one's weal and woe, for one's life and death, upon another. From its general prevalence it seeps into individual lives, and the general lack of initiative, of adventurousness in the East is due to it, though it passes for filial duty, ancestor worship, joint family life, and many of those negative Oriental virtues.

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At Port Said one comes up bang against Asia—the Asia, half-hearted about things Asiatic, following the line of least resistance (my father . . . and his father . . . line of argument), while completely awed by Europe and admiring all that is European with the furtive, thumb-sucking gloating of a child for the cherries in the cake, the Asia which provokes reflections such as the foregoing.

The Egyptian officials are dressed in a European way except for the red fez—typical again of Asia's divided allegiance: the Hindu wearing a European lounge suit surmounted by a turban, or even a sunhelmet, in which case he would exhibit his defiance by chewing betel leaf and nut, and spitting aggressively. These officials try to look very official, above corruption and bribery, thorough sons of the twentieth century, but nobody is fooled. I am told that at the Customs the clerk keeps the bills of lading of the customer who is reluctant to bribe at the very bottom of the pile. . . .

One of the officials who board the ship is dark-skinned, and his face pock-marked. I do not know which should come in order of precedence as introductions to Asia: the pock-marked face, or spitting. As you come from Europe to Asia the first pock-marked face you meet (whether this happens in Yugoslavia or in Turkey or in Port Said) is your signal that you have crossed the frontier.

The rest of the official party consists of light-skinned



men, one or two so light-skinned as to pass for Europeans, and they are handsome in a harem fashion. A herculean, dark-skinned man with a strip of cloth around his loins swims up and down the length of the steamer on the port side but nobody throws him any coins. He looks up, like a porpoise, as he swims, but there are neither disappointment nor curses written on his face.

Port Said, you might say, is not Asia, but Europe, the Europe of sea-ports like Marseilles and Naples with a few veiled women and old-world horse carriages thrown in. No, Port Said is definitely Asia, only it is near enough to Europe to import this season's latest European vices. Not that Asia (I include northern, that is Moslem, Africa in the term Asia) has not its age-perfected vices, and you could sample them in Port Said as much as in Shanghai or Singapore. Exhibitions of pederasty, for example, owe nothing to the low dives of Marseilles or Naples. Europe is a child in these matters with the self-consciousness and the exhibitionism of the child-mind.

What is there so shocking or savoury about 'Paris photographs' that touts should think they are conferring a favour upon you as they whisper in your ear, at the same time displaying one from the pack of photographs, and that you should feel a very sophisticated fellow (or very virtuous) as you refuse to be interested! The 'Nawab', not that he has not seen more shocking ones, but from sheer desire for thrill after his own heart, buys a pack without the knowledge of his wife who is walking ahead with the rest of the party. Later, when we go to the big Jewish department store he manages to slip out on the pretext of changing some money, and you can be sure he sampled some third-rate thrill in some back alley from the grin he wears when he faces you again.

I go into the Sindhi shop of Daldas & Sons on Farouk Street and get talking with a young salesman named Jeswami. To my surprise, and delight, he discusses Indian politics, and takes from a drawer the

cyclostyled circulars that the 'Foreign Department' of the Congress (one of Jawaharlal Nehru's ideas) used to send out. This is most heartening, for Sindhi merchants, whether they are in Buenos Aires or in Rangoon (and you would find a Sindhi shop in almost every town and seaport in the world), are interested only in trade. They are past masters at the art of making profits, and the profession is taught by father to son from generation to generation. Young Jeswami disabuses my mind of these notions. There are young Sindhis today, he tells me, who think of other things than the two columns of the ledger. From him I learn that Nahas Pasha and the Wafd are still very much a force in Egyptian politics.

I ask him to show me an Egyptian restaurant where I could eat rice and *kahob*, and he does. The proprietor's brother who happens to be in charge, a dark-skinned man looking very much like Nahas Pasha's photograph, undertakes to 'fix up' a meal for me. He goes into the kitchen from where I hear thunderous throat-clearing, followed by spitting, into what receptacle, drain, or at what other object, I know not.

All Asiatic men indulge in throat-clearing and spitting at all times of the day, beginning with a real good bout at their morning toilet. Whether it is the greasy, much-fried, much-oiled, much-spiced food they eat which causes them to clear their phlegm so frequently, or whether it is a male method of self-advertisement, like the peacock by the display of his feathers and strutting, I am yet to know. However I am greatly interested in the phenomenon, and I may yet earn a Ph.D. degree for a thesis on 'Expectoration and Asiatic Manhood: Further Researches into.'

I see my first veiled woman with lace-worked slits for her eyes, since leaving Europe. For the passing moment you care not whether they are prostitutes or poxed or whether they live in the Lane of the Cut-Throats or the Street of the Money-Changers but you are intrigued. The veiled Eastern woman, with bare feet, walks with a curious gait which affects you

sensually, however much you protest that it is only the artist in you which has been aroused by that Biblical figure. Herodias, who was Herod's undoing, and all those glamorous women who made Solomon impotent and so wise before he had passed his thirtieth year, were blood-sisters to this woman in shabby black dress and *yashmak* who trip-trips along Farouk Street seemingly quite unconcerned by the seemingly indifferent attention she draws from the crowds of men she passes.

\* \* \* \*

We steam down the Suez Canal, and on to the Red Sea. . . . As we near Masawa the ship's Bar is serving a 'Negus Cocktail' made up of one-tenth grenadine, one-tenth curaçao, two-tenths lemon juice, and six-tenths Jamaica rum.

This is flouting the Fates too much, I say to myself. I drink it, and find it an excellent cocktail, nevertheless.

In the evening the orchestra plays a slow fox-trot which I like very much. It is called *Se l'uoì Tu*—If You Wish.

\* \* \* \*

Just outside the Second Class Writing Room a middle-aged Englishwoman, wife of an English official in India presumably, travelling with a boy of five or six, is talking to that tall, lean, handsome, quiet Italian who has a cold, good-looking, slim, young wife.

The Englishwoman: 'But some of these Chinese are terribly anti-British. Why is that?'

The Italian: 'Anti-European; not anti-British.'

The Englishwoman: 'Instead of fighting against Russia, we fight against Germany! They are white people, same race as we. . . . Your wife's people in Shanghai?'

The Italian: 'Yes. She is Russian.'

The Englishwoman (very confused): 'But she looks very European. She looks so much like ourselves.' . . . (trying to cover up her tracks) 'There are a lot of

British officers in India married to Russian wives. There were many such marriages during the last war.'

One of the most suicidal states a nation can get itself into is developing the Under-Dog Mentality, or as an American would put it more expressively, 'kidding yourself into believing that every man's hand is against you'. In our everyday life we come across plenty of individual cases of such an obsession—and frankly, do we ever feel sorry for the man or woman who tries to convince us that he or she is all that is blameless but that one's fellow men have set themselves to ruining one? No, we don't, and naturally. Apart from everything else each of us has too many personal interests making demands on our self-interest to be able to be interested, even as an enemy, in another to that extent.

Madness is just self-obsession which has toppled over the brink and cannot climb back. The line that divides martyrdom from madness is a thin one, and any moment the martyr can cross that line and make himself, his self-importance, his self-righteousness, the paramount thing in Creation; and in that state, of course, he is capable of great physical endurance. In the last analysis nothing matters: not all the virtue, not all the perfection in the world matters one jot to Creation. The suns will go round their planets, and the Nataraja Dance of the Cosmos will go on, until aeons hence it dissolves into something else. But we, the sentient, thinking creatures of Creation, cannot live unless we give Life a meaning. Therefore: the necessity for changing values and standards. Life becomes interesting, worth living, when one appreciates such changes and feels passionately about this and that. This is what makes our earth so interesting and makes us speculate about heaven, which is simply the earth when wish has become reality.

But to save ourselves from madness, from obsession, we must preserve this sense of balance. It is then that we realize that Nature is too busy with its own schemes to want to punish us or protect us, and that our fellow

men have more than enough worries of their own to be so anxious to seek our annihilation. We alone make our own hell or heaven.

Asiatic philosophies which tried to teach Man this sense of balance—by showing him the immensity of Creation and the immense multitude of worlds and creatures who are sharers of it—have failed in their purpose. Our pagans are conscience-stricken pagans (*who find that paganism is necessary for their survival*) by having come in contact with such philosophies: and those who are not pagans have gone into perpetual mourning, having misunderstood or partially understood their philosophies. This sense of doom was exactly the opposite of what the religions and philosophies had intended: and it has resulted in that attitude to life which makes men turn themselves into targets for the slings and arrows of fate so readily, nay, almost eagerly. And if you psychoanalyzed such people you would find that they are by no means unobtrusive, self-effacing, penance-undergoing, from altruistic reasons, but because it gives them a pleasure to pour mental ashes on their heads and wear mental sackcloth.

The Oriental wife gives her husband the best part of the meal and eats what her lord and master deigns to overlook; and when she thinks of the other's need first she derives some spiritual titivation. The Indian tenant-farmer who is turned out of his home and farm by his landlord wails true enough, but in wailing he calls upon some tribal deity to look after him—and that he has found occasion to demand divine attention is satisfying to him. The Oriental servant enjoys his state of servility, and his master's callousness only drives him more to thinking of his misfortune.

And if it is the least pleasant, the least sociable trait in an individual, it is the worst misfortune that can befall a race, for it to think that it is being persecuted, is the victim of aggression, rapacity, injustice, and what not. Take the Jewish race, for example. Its prophets of old said some wonderfully wise things, but

their resignation to Fate savoured too much of the funeral chamber : and their legacy has been the undoing of that otherwise industrious and gifted race. The pariah dog howls the moment you lift your hand, before a blow has fallen upon it. Similarly those with the persecution-complex start running away long before anybody thinks of chasing them away.

And so with the Indian. In olden times Indian races fought against invader and conqueror, and won sometimes and fell sometimes. But there is today, I don't know dating from when, and attributable to what philosophy of resignation, this plaintive, down-at-the-mouth, we-are-sinned-against complex, worthy of a moneylender's mentality, but quite unworthy of people to whom Sri Krishna's battle-cry, the *Bhagavat Gita*, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra is a divine gospel. If someone has taken what belongs to you, take it back like a man, without turning up the penal code every time. There, I have hit upon it! There is too much of a Vakildom in India. The legal complex coupled to the martyrcomplex : that Man and Nature are allied against one, and that one is born to suffer, unless one can find a clause in the Indian Penal Code exempting one from a particular punishment—this is Indian psychology. And it is a thousand pities that with one or two exceptions the 'leaders' of Indian nationalism today typify this attitude; and it is from them that the rank and file have taken up their cue.

This makes for a dulling of the critical sense. If the chimney is smoking and somebody shouts out, 'The chimney is smoking,' everyone else will shout out, 'The chimney is smoking,' until some one thinks of the architect and blames him, when the rest will take up the new cry, 'Death to this architect!' No one would care to see what is wrong with the flue. By the time they have worked off their hysteria the chimney has become old history, and in other countries they are moving the boundary line. Or if no one minds the chimney smoking it would draw no protest from anyone. Everyone will be resigned to continual suffo-

cation by smoke. 'Oh, this is good enough. Don't bother. We are quite comfortable.' This is the mentality you come up against in India, not because the people are considerate and want to save you trouble, but because they hate to be put to any trouble themselves.

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If at Port Said you get your first reminder of how Asia adjusts itself to Time's demands, at Aden you get your first experience of what awaits you from Bombay onwards. Under the full sun of the tropics glare is inevitable and colour shows more vividly and all tropical people have given in without thinking why to this natural predilection for bright colours; and where they have followed the example of custom and kept to the greens and reds and blacks and yellows they evoke our admiration. Those colours suit the black and brown and light brown and golden skins of Asiatics. But indigo, khaki, and the greys of tweeds do not. There are errors of taste these days even here; but in their choice of colours for clothes, for tiles of roofs, for decorating their door-steps, Asiatics can still be relied upon to show good taste—that is, all except the millionaires and the one-fourth and three-fourths millionaires who install refrigerators in their drawing rooms, and show their visitors into the drawing room with the invitation of 'ease yourself', or wishing to stagger their eyes with the more expensively furnished inner apartments say, 'Come and see my private parts'. If such *faux pas* were made by simple unsophisticated fellows I would not think of holding them up to ridicule, but I have no mercy for the uncouth, one-tenth Europeanized Newrich—the moneylenders and land-grabbers who have been ennobled into 'Rajas' by the British Government. That for Colour.

But as regards Sound. The tropical atmosphere is so clear that the least sound makes a vivid impact upon your ear-drums. Sounds which are more or less natural like the creaking of a bullock-cart axle or the tinkling of a bell on the leader of a flock of goats merge into

this atmosphere as unobtrusively as a leaf falls from branch to ground. But the artificial din made by humans in India and Ceylon (and elsewhere in Asia) with their voices and with those instruments with which they claim to produce music—the drums and the 'dis-harmoniums' and the brass bands, and nowadays the amplifier and loudspeaker—what strange perverseness, what curious physiological and nervous system it is that urges them to create all that noise, and more, that enables them to stand it, not to speak of appreciating it, I have not been able to discover. All I could say is that it is perhaps some Montessori principle overlooked in childhood and indulged in with a vengeance in adult life.

Black-skinned lascars dressed in indigo and looking like executioners, Somalis, with those perpetually somnolent eyes, Indian Banyas, big-turbaned Punjabis, Gujeratis, all of them making as much noise as if Chungking was being reduced to a shambles by Japanese airmen, swarm aboard at Aden. And of course, the Sahibs, Memsahibs, and their brood, from the chicken stage upwards. You don't see the Sahib at Port Said. At least you are unaware of him there. But at Aden you do. You know that from then on during all your waking hours you are to be constantly reminded what an inferior fellow in all respects—in physical build, in looks, in dress, in airs (smoking, talking, carrying a cane, ordering servants, etc.)—you are compared to the Sahib.

They are dressed in khaki shorts and shirt, or white drill trousers and shirt, and looking very cool, very self-possessed, telling as it were the Blacks and Browns, who pay for the tailoring and the comfortable bungalows and the numerous servants of the others, 'Look, you niggers, if only you had the sense, how comfortably dressed you could be, and how you could look and behave with dignity as we do!' One Sahib, I suppose some big man at Aden, has brought along his daughter, and you can see she has recently arrived from England. She has been told not to *see*, whatever else her eyes saw,



not to *see* the 'natives'. They are not there! See how well the older folk who have been long enough this side of Suez carry it off. Oh, she has learnt the trick quick enough, and does it well enough though a trifle too self-consciously—that is, annihilating by thought at least the 'natives'.

I am not blaming them. Not for one moment. It is no use a man undertaking a thing unless he can carry it through. And undertaking an empire is not a simple job. If the Hindus, or the Chinese, or the Malays, had appropriated England or any other European country they would have had, as 'Imperialists', to set up artificial standards of conduct. Only, European subjects would have had something to say about it, whereas we uphold and look up to these artificial standards, and are disappointed if the White Man does not behave aggressively, brusquely, treating us as if we were dogs. Mind you, it is not only the 'native' personal servants of White Men, but almost all of us, who have this Olympian awe for them. They have done very little to create it. There was in the East, long before the White Men ever came to it, this rule by fear, this abject respect for him who was the littlest bit above one, from reasons of wealth, power or birth. It is still there. We have our own brand of Sahibdom, a crueller one against which there is no appeal.

SO MUCH NOISE, NOISE, NOISE, NOISE, as if Tilbury, Southampton, Cherbourg, Bremenhaven, all the ports in the world were concentrated in Aden harbour—all because the *Conte Rosso* has dropped anchor and is taking a few Indians on board. I talk to a group of three young fellows dressed in white drill suits who come from Konkan, south of Bombay. They are employees at the cigarette factory in Aden. Their wages are a hundred rupees a month each. They almost boast of this. They save so much. They are highly satisfied with life. Their faces bear the stamp of those who have arrived at El Dorado.

The first steerage passengers come on board here. They are a family of Gujeratis—Papa, Mama, daughter.

daughter's husband, their infant, Papa's and Mama's younger offspring, oh, about a round dozen in all. They are merchants I am sure: and quite rich, I am sure—able to travel first class if they choose. But there they are travelling steerage—partly to save money: and even more because they feel at home on the steerage deck. They can recline at their ease in all sorts of postures (they have already settled down to that, within the first half-hour) on the floor there; Papa can smoke his *hookah* and spit from his reclining posture without having to sit up to do it; Mama in her voluminous folds of sari and veil, her ankles and wrists weighed down with jewellery, can deposit her fat in some corner; they can cook their meals there; in short, they can 'ease themselves' in the words, already quoted, of a newly rich Mysorean. To travel and behave in a way to bring credit to their country and respect to themselves asks for more effort from them. This too is India's psychology: 'Oh, let us do things in our own fashion: let us "ease ourselves" on our own doorstep—it is so much less trouble than having to sit on a commode and to have to pull a chain to flush out the pan afterwards!' And then if the rest of the world turns upon India and says: 'You, with your boastings of an ancient culture, you are no better than some primitive African tribe in your disinclination for Progress,' why then, we howl, and so much bleating goes on in our newspapers.

No, we must be hard upon ourselves. Harder, much harder. Having to live up to the reputation of an ancient culture, or a great nation, or one that would be great, we must undergo a few physical discomforts—such as having to shave daily, or twice daily if your beard grows fast enough, changing from your bed-room attire to day attire when you start the day, sitting in a chair where lounging on a divan against a bolster would be more comfortable, and controlling the desire to spit because however satisfying the sensation to ourselves (if it is) it is disgusting to the more sensitive. These are small sacrifices as the price of belonging to a great

nation : but these sacrifices would earn us more respect among the nations of the world than a laborious two-column editorial or a ponderous University Convocation Address, the delivering of which, I notice, is now quite a serious pastime in India.

*Victor Kiernan*

## THE SEÑORITA

OH!' said Henry Burdash. 'Well . . . . in that case . . . . just bring me another bottle of soda, will you?'

His bearer retreated along the verandah, and Henry lay back in his long chair with momentary relief. It was just like that fellow to insist on showing his accounts when he knew his master was in no condition to struggle. And no doubt he had realized that his master was playing for time, and was not likely to give him much.

The soda spluttered into the glass, and he took a long drink. This gained him another moment, and he had a second motive in the form of a feverish throbbing about the temples which the cool air of Simla could not dissipate, and which, ever since he woke up, had been making him wonder where and when he went to sleep.

'Well,' he went on, putting the glass back reluctantly on the three-legged Kashmir table at his elbow, 'I can't remember smoking all these cigars. Four whole boxes in a month?'

'The visitors, Sahib.' Munir wore an air of not wishing to criticize them.

'Who? Mr. Dickson? He only smokes one or two.'

'He puts some in his pocket when he goes away.'

'Well . . . . that's as may be.'

'Huzoor?'

Munir's English did not run to idioms, and Henry made use of them when he wanted to save his own face by saying something that might pass for a reprimand, while sparing Munir's face. He turned the leaf of the monthly account-book, and stared gloomily at the next column.

'I don't remember eating this chicken,' he said doggedly.

Munir met his eyes calmly. Henry recognized a polite suggestion that that was not the only thing he failed to remember, and blushed.

'Oh yes, I do,' he corrected himself hastily, withdrawing his eye. He turned another page, where he found himself in a maze of potatoes, brinjals and cauliflowers. 'Anyone would think I was a damned vegetarian,' he muttered.

'Huzoor?'

'Oh, nothing . . . . I say, Munir, when the deuce did I buy this rickshaw?'

Munir bent over his shoulder and examined the item pointed out: Rickshaw, 15 rupees.

'Not buy it, Sahib. The coolies who brought you home said they had lot of trouble. They were making noise. I paid them rupees fifteen.'

Henry blushed again, and wished he were a man of iron and could tell Munir what a liar he was. But, after all, *was* he? How was a fellow to know? . . . . A shadow fell across his chair, and a voice hailed him.

'Oh, hullo, Joseph!' he responded, closing the note-book with alacrity. 'Come along! Munir . . . . ask me later to write you a cheque.'

Munir pressed the book on him officiously. 'Two more pages, sir, look.'

'Oh, do buzz off. Bring some coffee, if you want something to do.' Munir buzzed off, and Inspector Dickson sat down.

'Going through the accounts?' he enquired with a chuckle. 'I bet that chap of yours is congratulating himself on a good morning's work.'

'A good month's work, you mean. I suppose with your policeman's instincts you check your accounts every day.'

'My wife does. Naturally. Everyone does. Horribly robbed if you don't.'

'I've no doubt I *am*.' Henry lit a cigarette, and threw it away. 'This tobacco tastes like old straw, curse it.'

'Tastes all right to me,' returned the Inspector, puffing contentedly. 'I say, if you administer the national income on the same lines as you do your own, it's no wonder the income-tax is going up by leaps and bounds.'

'Not at all; I'm the most zealous watch-dog that ever sat in the Finance Department. Sometimes I have to look in the mirror to know which is myself and which is the adding-machine. But then it's very different; it isn't *my* money I'm haggling over with contractors and so on. I can't split hairs all the time over a few annas with a wretched servant.'

'You're too aristocratic, Henry. A pickpocket's a pickpocket, whether he's a contractor or a servant.'

'Well, the man's got to live, after all,' said Henry, relapsing further in his chair towards the horizontal. 'The thing is, he's got such an honest face, I can't bring myself to accuse him of embezzlement. So we keep these interviews on the footing of two gentlemen discussing economics in the abstract.'

'You need a wife, Henry.'

'Cost me more in the long run. I'd have to go through *her* accounts.'

'Then get *my* wife to help you one day.'

'Might do that. But not officially, you know. It would be like telling Munir I'd set a lawyer on him. She might just drop in some time—when I'm out—and ask to see the accounts casually. One expert comparing notes with another.'

'Pooh! You're hopeless, Henry. Spineless. You'll be bankrupt one day. Creditors setting lawyers on

you. Salary attached. Clerks in your office guffawing. How will you feel then ?'

'Not much worse than I feel now,' said Henry with a sigh.

'That reminds me,' Dickson remarked. 'One of my men saw you last night, about two o'clock, coming home up the Mall.'

'You can take his word for it,' said Henry languidly. 'He probably has a better-trained memory than I have.'

'You were mounting the slope backwards, hauling an empty rickshaw on the end of a rope, and shouting to the coolies to get the artillery in position.'

'Oh Lord! . . . another fifteen rupees in the next account.'

'I don't know about that, but if your boss gets to hear of this sort of thing . . . .'

'Even old Angus can't object to a little moderate refreshment on a Saturday night!'

'Moderate?'

'One glass gets to my head so quickly, Joseph.'

'I dare say, when it's got a dozen others to climb on the backs of. Well, I must be getting on. There was another of these dratted burglaries last night. At a house called "Elstead", not far below the post-office. There's a set of very wide-awake burglars in Simla just now, Henry.'

'Then don't waste your time here, Joseph. I may be a burglar, but I'm not a wide-awake one. Go and earn your living.'

'You might see that your doors are locked at nights; no saying that they mightn't pay a visit here.'

'Warn Munir, my dear fellow; he's got more to lose than I have.'

Henry opened a novel and settled down for an hour's convalescence. Some minutes later he realized that his book was upside down, and readjusted it.

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A few evenings later, with every appearance of being fully convalescent, Henry placed himself in a chair at Davico's, lit a cigar, and ran his eye round the room

to gauge its available resources. A waiter leaned towards him a confidential ear.

'*Salaam aleikum*,' said Henry, with an affable wave of his cigar.

'Good evening, Sir,' replied the waiter. A waiter at Davico's does not readily condescend to Hindostani. 'What you wanting, Sir?'

'What do I want, waiter? Wine, women and song. What else?'

'Sir?' The waiter brought his ear to bear more closely.

'Have you never heard of Life, my good man? Where are you from?'

'Sir, I am coming from over there.'

'Tut! *Tumhara kaunsa watan hai?*'

'My place is Maharashtra, please.'

'Ah? I've been there. A dry, thirsty place, waiter. Bring me a sherry!'

Henry resumed his scrutiny of the room, and observed a young man standing near him in an extremely ill-fitting dinner-jacket. He was just wondering whether the man belonged to the band, when he turned round and disclosed the features of a late colleague.

'Pale Ale!' exclaimed Henry, and Patel hurried up to his table and shook hands. He had answered to this nickname in the office, a far-fetched pun on his real name.

'Ah, Pale Ale!—you'd rather sit next to the wall? I don't wonder . . . Where on earth did you get that scare-crow costume from?'

'Out of your lumber-room.'

'Really?' Henry stared. 'I didn't see you there.'

'It's like this; you must have heard that Pillai has been put in charge of our Department, and you know how these fellows are—whenever they get hold of a new Department, they go about telling everyone that they've found it in a most shocking state of disorganization, and they're having to work like Negroes to pull it together.'

'We shall be doing the same in a few years more,' said Henry tolerantly.

'I got back to Simla this evening and found a note from Pillai telling me to meet him here at dinner for what he calls a little chat about office matters. Then I discovered that my dinner-jacket was away being cleaned. So as your house was on my way, I just dropped in and borrowed this old thing of yours. It took me half an hour to dig it up out of an old trunk.'

'Why didn't you call Munir?'

'I did, but there was nobody about.'

'What? no bearer? no bishti? no mehtar? no khansaman? no mali? What do I keep a large, expensive staff for?'

'I believe they'd all gone out to watch some sort of a tamasha down the road—a juggler performing . . . .'

'Anyway, you needn't look so nervous; Pillai's own clothes are nothing to boast of, and you won't have any women with you.'

'H'm,' said Patel hesitantly, retaining his air of embarrassment; 'it isn't . . . . it isn't my clothes that are worrying me . . . .'

'Of course not; it's *mine*.'

'Not exactly . . . . Ah . . . .'

The waiter appeared with a tray, and Patel automatically picked up the glass and took a gulp.

'Is there anything else I can do for you?' enquired Henry, lifting his eyebrows. 'You've got my dinner-jacket, you've got my sherry . . . .'

'Oh, was it yours? Sorry; have another.'

'Thanks very much, I will. Waiter, bring me three more sherries; we'd better be on the safe side. By the way, there's Pillai coming in, hadn't you better run and salaam him?'

'Let him wait a bit, he won't see me. The fact is . . . . That old woman's listening to us,' said Patel, sinking his voice and looking sideways at the next table.

'Nonsense. What on earth's the matter with you?'

'Well, look here, Henry,' went on his friend, uncomfortably; 'have you seen those photos the police



have circulated of the gold ornaments that were stolen from Sir Sohrab's place?'

'Yes . . . . Good heavens, you aren't going to tell me you've found them! There's a thousand rupees reward.'

'I have.'

'Where?'

'In your lumber-room.'

Henry was engaged in removing three glasses from the waiter's tray.

'Pardon . . . . what did you say?'

'Shh!'

'Eh? what are you mumbling about? Here, try another sherry, and then test your voice again.'

'Curse it, why don't you listen? I said I found those ornaments in your lumber-room!'

'What ornaments? Oh yes, Sir Sohrab's. Pale Ale,' said Henry, placing his glass carefully on the table, 'do my ears play me false? . . . . No, they don't. I read it in your face. Well, I'll be damned!'

'You'll be jailed, what's more, if you don't look out. Of course,' said Patel awkwardly, 'I don't want to . . . .'

'I see your dilemma,' interrupted Henry amusedly. 'You shrink from going to the police in my own dinner-jacket and denouncing me. Your delicacy does you credit, Pale Ale! Have another sherry.'

'Do be serious!' exclaimed Patel. 'We've got to do some thinking!'

'I *am* thinking,' Henry answered soothingly, 'but there's no harm in wetting one's whistle at the same time. You say you . . . .' He broke off. 'By Jove, d'you see over there? Talk of the devil!'

'Who is it?'

'The Police.'

'Good God! They're watching you already, Henry?'

'Not at all; we're watching *them*. Him, rather. It seems to me, Ale, as *you* can't very well approach the police, it's up to me to do it for you. Joseph!' He waved vigorously. 'And . . . . waiter! Five more sherries, please. We shall need them—every drop.'

'You've had too many already,' expostulated Patel. 'What d'you think you're doing?'

'The police are a good man's best friend,' returned Henry sententiously. 'It's our duty to lend them every encouragement.'

'I suppose you're anxious to be overheard,' remarked Dickson, who was already at hand. 'Why this enthusiasm for law and order?'

'Mr. Patel . . . . Inspector Dickson,' said Henry. 'Sit down, Joseph; we've got news for you.'

'Something in my line?'

'Oh no!' said Patel hastily. 'I was just telling Burdash that when I drove up from Kalka this afternoon, there was . . . . there were seven Chinamen coming up in the same car, you know.'

'Seven? How big was it?'

'Three, I mean. They were all—er—smoking pipes.'

'Well, well,' observed the Inspector, glancing at the cluster of glasses; 'boys will be boys, no doubt.'

'No, they were all quite old men—at least . . . .'

'My friend is apt to be a bit long-winded, Joseph,' interrupted Henry; 'he's anxious for you to have the whole facts of the case, but to cut his long story fairly short . . . .'

'Have a drink, Mr. Dickson!' interrupted Patel in turn. 'Have a sherry! No? You'd like whisky, of course. Bearer!'

'No use,' said Henry, 'the Inspector isn't interested in any sort of alcohol, unless there's poison in it.'

'Alcohol is poison enough by itself,' said Dickson. 'Bearer, orangeade.'

'Quite right,' said Patel eagerly. 'Just poison. I never touch it.'

'Indeed?'

'We're wandering off the point again,' broke in Henry. 'How are your burglars getting on, Joseph?'

'Extremely well, thanks. They made another haul last night.'

'Good. Now, you see this dinner-jacket my friend's

wearing? It's *my* dinner-jacket, Joseph. Everything hangs on that.'

'Everything except a few of the buttons!' exclaimed Patel, with a miserable attempt at jollity. 'H'm! . . . Do you dance, Inspector?'

'Not with you, young man.'

'I see my boss over there looking at me,' said Patel desperately; 'I must go and talk to him.'

'Rubbish,' said Henry, pulling him back into his seat. 'He's looking at that girl in what would have been a green dress if the tailor hadn't run out of cloth. So am I, now I come to think of it. After all, we didn't come here just to sit in a corner all night, I take it. Let's hurry up. Joseph, you haven't traced those things stolen from Sir Sohrab, have you? No—and why not? Shall I tell you, Joseph?'

'No!' cried Patel.

'Because', pursued Henry, 'Patel's got them!'

The Inspector put down his orangeade and looked at the pair.

'Or rather,' Henry corrected himself. 'he found them an hour ago in my lumber-room.'

'Henry,' said Dickson, 'are you sober?'

'Mildly,' returned Henry. 'Now, there are our facts. Give us your theory.'

'I'd better tell you myself, Inspector,' said Patel resignedly, and told his tale again.

'I see.' Inspector Dickson frowned. 'And what is *your* story, Henry?'

'Mine? Why should I have one?'

'You can hardly have a boxful of gold on your premises without knowing it. I should think.'

'Of course you can. Any number. The stuff was in the same old trunk as the dinner-jacket, you say, Pale Ale? Well, I'm not a one-shirt tramp, and it's not my business to keep an eye on all my wardrobe—it's Munir's. That trunk only holds old clothes past wearing; I haven't looked into it for ages.'

Inspector Dickson looked at his watch briskly.

'What time were you there, Mr. Patel?' he asked.

'About eight. I left everything just as it was.'

'Good. Now, we must get hold of it first and talk afterwards. Come along, Henry.'

'Come along? What's it got to do with me? No one pays me to investigate burglaries. What about that girl in the green dress?'

'What about her? She's married.'

'Well, I'm not, Joseph, and it takes two to make a quarrel; besides, I'm broadminded.'

Inspector Dickson took his arm firmly.

'And I've got a huge bill to pay for sherry. Where's the bearer?'

'Oh, I'll look after that,' said Patel.

'Thank you, Mr. Patel,' said the Inspector. 'And . . . keep this strictly to yourself at present, please.'

'Oh, yes,' replied Patel. 'Good luck, Henry.' He wiped his forehead, and started in search of the impatient Mr. Pillai.

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'Behave as if nothing had happened,' cautioned the Inspector as they left their rickshaws and descended the flight of steps that led down to Henry's bungalow. 'We don't want to scare that Munir of yours.'

'Nothing *has* happened, so far as I'm concerned. I regard myself as a mere spectator. The onlooker sees most of the game, Joseph.'

'And sometimes gets most of the blame, Henry.'

They sat down in the study, and Munir was despatched for coffee, which might be expected to keep him out of the way for ten minutes.

'By the way, Munir,' remarked Henry, 'how many cigars did you say Mr. Dickson took away last month?'

'Cigars, sir?' repeated Munir, hesitating as he met the Inspector's indignant eye. 'I forget, sir.'

'Oh, well, it doesn't matter,' said Henry negligently. 'Coffee.'

'*Achchhi bat*, huzoor,' replied Munir, who relapsed into Hindostani when anything jolted him.

'The habit of burglary, Joseph,' remarked the host,

'is probably more widespread than we imagine. Have a smoke.'

'No, thanks, let's have a look at this precious trunk.'

A door led into the lumber-room, and Henry put on the light, climbed up on a chair, and lifted down a large, dingy old suitcase. Dickson opened this and began pulling out odds and ends of old clothes. On the bottom, loosely wrapped in a piece of silk, lay five gleaming objects of metal.

'Pretty things,' said Henry, stretching out his hand. The Inspector pulled him back.

'Don't touch!' he exclaimed. 'I've got to look them over for finger-prints.'

'A smart idea,' said Henry admiringly. 'I'd no notion that the police were so up-to-date in India. I thought you relied on a good thick stick to collect most of your evidence for you.'

'We can't work that way with I.C.S. men in Simla,' returned Dickson unpleasantly, 'so we have to fall back on other methods. Now how am I going to get the stuff away quietly?'

'You can take this hand-box if you like.'

Dickson wrapped up the ornaments carefully, while Henry replaced the suit-case, and they came back to the study, where coffee soon appeared.

'How much do you know about that Patel?' demanded the Inspector. 'I suppose there's no chance of his having . . . .'

'Lord, no. He's the last word in respectability.'

'Oh, is he? Only, under the circumstances, is *your* testimonial worth much, Henry? Or is it the pot calling the kettle white?' The Inspector drank his coffee in meditative silence.

'You make a fuss about your cigars,' he roused himself to observe, 'try one of my cigarettes.' He pulled out a silver case, wiped it with his handkerchief, and handed it over.

'What's that for?' enquired Henry, taking one and handing back the case. 'A criminologist's subtlety?'

'Just politeness, my boy. The manners of the old

school, as you might say. Well'—Dickson got up—'I'm off. I'm just wondering whether I oughtn't to arrest that chap Munir on the spot.'

'Or me,' suggested Henry.

'Or you. However, I expect neither of you will bolt tonight. In the morning, stay here till I come, and don't let Munir be in the lumber-room alone.'

'And what about my office?'

'Just ring up,' said Mr. Dickson, 'and tell them you're expecting a headache.'

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He arrived in the morning at ten o'clock, long before Henry had thought it necessary to have a headache; there was no bureaucratic rigidity about the time of his departure for office. His superiors occasionally threw out hints about this fact, and some had approached it more robustly—only to learn that, as one of them observed, to a blind horse a wink is as good as a nod.

'Are you putting the stuff back here?' he enquired, as the Inspector made for the lumber-room and opened the hand-box. 'What for?'

'You'll see,' said Dickson briefly. They hurried through the job, and a minute later were back in the study.

'Come to the point,' said Henry, pressingly. 'What did you find?'

'Where?'

'Prints, Joseph, fingerprints!'

'I got my men out of bed early,' replied the Inspector. 'They weren't very pleased with me.'

'Nor am I, confound it. What did they find?'

'They didn't find any of Munir's finger-prints,' said Dickson, shaking his head. 'By the way, I've brought one of your coffee-cups back.'

'Splendid!' commented Henry. 'I knew the fellow was innocent. Would he be skinning me of two annas here and three annas there if he had heaps of bullion at his disposal?'

'On the other hand,' proceeded Dickson, 'those

ornaments were all covered with *your* finger-prints, Henry.'

Henry gazed at him blankly.

'You don't say so, Joseph?'

'My experts say so, which is more important. Henry, you're in a bit of an awkward position, I'm bound to tell you.'

'I'm beginning to think so myself.'

'Now, look here,' said Dickson, taking out his notebook; 'that stuff was stolen on the night of the 17th. Can you tell me where you were on the night of the 17th?'

'I expect I was in bed,' replied Henry cautiously. 'Part of the night, at least.'

'And the other part? Just throw your mind back.'

'I can't throw it very far, Joseph, it's too heavy.'

'And these other dates,' went on Dickson, consulting his notebook; 'the 9th, the 15th, and the 23rd of last month. Do you keep a diary?'

'I've got a pocket one with a few engagements marked in it. Let me see . . . the 9th? Yes . . . 15th . . . and what?'

'April the 23rd. Can you tell me what you were doing?'

Henry hesitated.

'I could, Joseph,' he answered finally, 'but to be quite frank and honest, I don't want to.'

'In other words, you were with a woman. I read you like a book, Henry. The only question is—which one? One might easily guess wrong; there's too much margin for error.'

'You're barking up the wrong tree.'

'A good alibi would come in very useful, Henry. Think it over. The law is no respecter of persons.'

'Not even of purses? . . . But Joseph—those finger-prints; how could they be there?'

'That's for *you* to say,' returned Dickson, picking up his hat.

'I see your point,' remarked Henry gloomily. 'Well, are you off? Can I go to my office now?'

'Yes, yes, go on. Come and have tea with me today; don't forget.'

'Thanks. Take a cigar with you . . . . I said take a cigar, Joseph, not ten cigars; I can see myself paying enormous fees to a lawyer in the near future. I've got to economize.'

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'Hullo, Burglar,' said Mrs. Dickson. 'So you've been leading a double life!'

'So it appears,' admitted Henry, taking a chair.

'A triple life, you should say,' remarked the Inspector; 'we always knew Henry had at least two.'

'At least. Last year, for instance, when he was to be seen every night in the direction of Summer Hill . . .'

'Where the daffodils are so pretty,' put in Henry.

' . . . . and where that girl from Calcutta was living.'

'Many other people live at Summer Hill,' Henry protested. 'Sir George Thistlethwaite, for example. As a member of the Finance Department, it's my duty to go and sit at his feet a bit, and learn about the rate of exchange and so forth.'

'Thistle lives half a mile on this side of where you were usually encountered,' said Mrs. Dickson.

'Very likely when I left his place I was walking in my sleep.'

'And singing in your sleep?'

'Sophia, I refuse to be hectored. Leave that sort of thing to your husband, and give me some tea.'

Inspector Dickson finished a piece of toast.

'I've been prosecuting some enquiries, Henry,' he began. 'As I said this morning, your position is a little uncomfortable.'

'How are things looking now? Dark?'

'Black. Those are chicken sandwiches over there.'

'Thanks,' said Henry, helping himself. 'As served in His Majesty's jails?'

'Only when Sophia smuggles them in to deserving cases who tell her it's their birthday. Pity you've no children, by the way; her Home for convicts' children



is very well run. She has a curious sympathy for the criminal classes.'

'I'm glad to hear it,' said Henry; 'I'll trouble her for some more tea. How are we for jails in Simla, Joseph? Good accommodation?'

'Good company, at least. You'll learn a good deal there.'

'Only the ladies live separately,' remarked Mrs. Dickson. 'By the way, d'you happen to know the Spanish for *cherchez la femme*?'

'Eh? Let me see. . . . *Busca a la mujer*, I think. Whereas in German. . . .'

'Come, come,' said the Inspector, lighting a cigarette, 'about this woman. How much do you know of her?'

'Who? The girl from Calcutta?'

'No, Henry, no. The girl from Madrid.'

Henry started.

'I don't quite follow you, Joseph.'

'Possibly not, but one of my men followed you this morning.'

'Confound your men! What for?'

'It was hardly necessary, really. You see, Henry, Sophia knew all about it.'

'Oh? . . . I thought I'd been conducting the affair with the utmost discretion.'

'This is Simla,' said Mrs. Dickson. 'The mountains all round produce the most curious echoes, you know.'

'In any case,' said Henry, recovering himself, 'there's no reason why one shouldn't take Spanish lessons. Spain is a country that will have important financial relations with India one day. Ask old Thistlethwaite.'

'There's no reason why one should conduct Spanish lessons with the utmost discretion, as far as I can see,' remarked Mrs. Dickson.

'Call it an excess of delicacy if you like,' said Henry.

'I'm particularly strict about relations with ladies.'

'You haven't told us what you know about her.'

'Pooh,' said his wife, 'what can Henry know about a woman? He's such a fool.'

'I know a good deal about women, Sophia. Years of quiet observation have taught me a lot. About *young* women, I mean.'

'I'm a young woman—morally speaking.'

'Speaking in *every* way, Sophia,' said Henry politely.

'And you fancy you understand *me*, no doubt.'

'Occasionally.'

'Sophia,' broke in the Inspector, 'will you allow me to do a little cross-examining? Now, Henry: who is Miss de Miralla?'

'*Señorita* de Miralla,' Henry corrected him; 'it sounds better; and roll the l's round your tongue more, like old sherry. Well, she's a highly respectable orphan, whose family had to leave Spain because of some political trouble. She traces her descent from the great Marquis of Vilanora.'

'Never heard of him, but he doesn't sound as if you *could* descend much further.'

'I bet she expects to trace her *ascent* from the great Henry Burdash,' added Mrs. Dickson. 'Spanish lessons? Humbug.'

'Really, Joseph,' said Henry in a tone of complaint, 'there's a hard, cynical streak in your wife that I don't like. Amparito . . . .'

'Who?'

'The *Señorita*—pretty name, isn't it?—she happens to be rather pretty, but that isn't a sin.'

'No, but it leads to a good many. And what about this chap Toledano?'

'*Señor* Don Cristobal Toledano? An equally blameless compatriot of hers. I've nothing against him; he's old enough to be her father. He does odd jobs for the newspapers, and has a great admiration for the British character.'

'All foreigners do, when they're broke. Never trust a foreigner who admires the British character, Henry. How long have you known the lady?'

'Two calendar months, but I feel as if I had . . . .'

'Cut it out,' said Mrs. Dickson.

'How did you meet her? Did the impetus come from your side, or hers?'

'It came from a rickshaw on Scandal Point. She fell out of it, and I'd only to spring forward . . . .'

'Not very easy to do that,' said Mrs. Dickson critically. 'She must be a good actress, at least.'

'Sophia! must you be so brutal? I tell you, Amparito has a heart of gold.'

'And a pocketful, I dare say, by this time.'

'Well,' said the Inspector, who had been walking up and down deep in thought, 'tonight is likely to be a fine evening.'

'Not for me,' said Henry, 'with the Law closing in on me from all sides like an octopus.'

'And Spanish is a beautiful language, they say. Why not go and have a lesson tonight?'

'And have your ruffians pursuing me again? Compromise a beautiful orphan? No, Joseph. Certainly not.'

'Nobody will follow you,' promised Dickson. 'Just do what you're told. You'll be quite unobserved.'

'Oh, all right, if you make a point of it. Well, goodbye, Sophia. If we don't meet again on this side of the dock, remember the chicken sandwiches. The day after I'm clapped in jail is my birthday.'

Inspector Dickson dropped into Henry's office next day, and took him out to lunch.

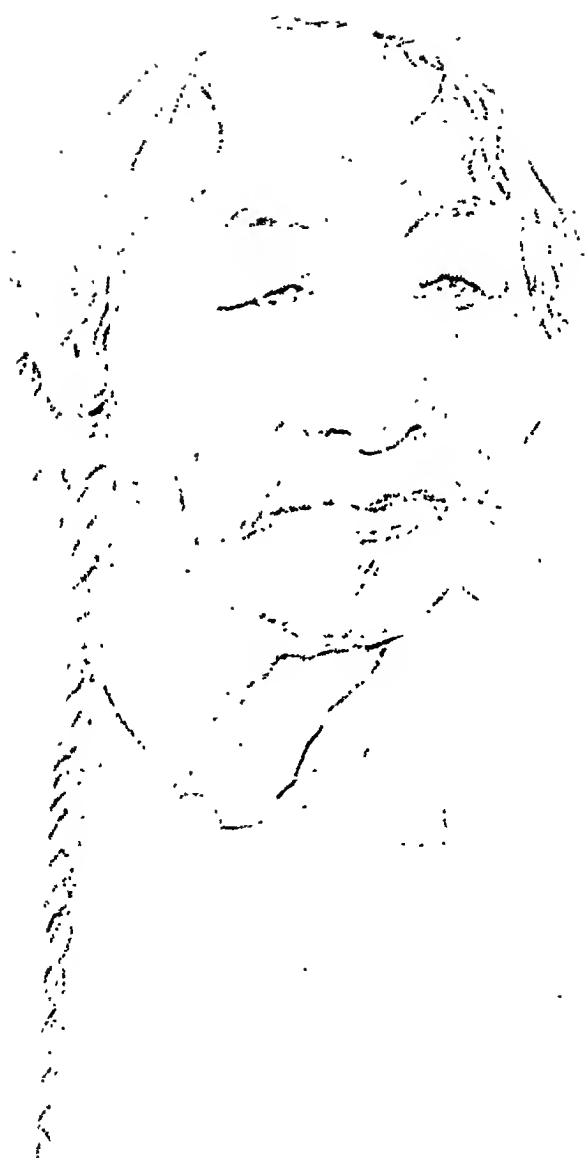
'I hope you enjoyed last night's lesson,' he remarked, as he took up his fork.

'I don't like your tone,' replied Henry. 'There's nothing so odd about calling on a young lady. Anyone might call on her. You could call on her, Joseph.'

'I did—this morning.'

'Oh, did you?' said Henry, somewhat taken aback. 'A charming young creature, eh?'

'I didn't think her very charming, and Sophia's sure she isn't very young; she may be a creature, I dare



TIBETAN DANDY WALLAH

GRACE E. CL



'Really, if one listened to Sophia, there wouldn't be one woman in the world between the ages of twenty and twenty-five! By Jove, I've a good mind to marry her, just to teach you both a lesson! However, Joseph, how is our case getting on? Tell me the news.'

'It's not our policy to take suspects into our confidence.'

'Come, come; you're off duty now,' said Henry, taking another chop. 'Tell me everything, and I'll pay for this lunch.'

'A policeman is never off duty, Henry. His suspicions never sleep.'

'You've been bullying my poor Señorita.'

'Not at all. I just asked whether she could confirm that you had been with her on certain dates.'

'That isn't quite the thing,' exclaimed Henry, putting down his knife and fork with some annoyance. 'Of course I went yesterday morning to warn her that there was a misunderstanding. She wanted to run out and tell you I'd been with her on all those nights—evenings, I should say. I had to make her promise not to say anything.'

'She agreed quite cheerfully about two nights—evenings, I beg your pardon,' said the Inspector, watching him; 'but not the rest. She thought you must have made a mistake in your diary.'

'Odd,' observed Henry, running his hand through his hair. 'You must have frightened her—confused her.'

'Ah? Still, she was awfully sorry to hear of your misunderstanding. Very sympathetic indeed.'

'Dear creature!' Henry resumed his chop. 'I *will* marry her, for two pins!'

'She won't marry *you* for two pins, Henry; you'll have to be worth a good deal more than that. Perhaps you *are*, though,' added Dickson offhandedly. 'There was another burglary last night.'

'The devil! Where?'

'Chhota Simla. Some silver stuff. Worth ten

thousand chips, the owner says; but they always exaggerate.'

'When was it, d'you know?'

'Yes. Do you know what time you left the Señorita's?'

'Twelve-thirty. There's a clock on her mantel-piece.'

'Is there? Then it must have put on a good deal of speed after she looked at it last, because she noticed just before you left that it was quarter to twelve. Perhaps it's a Spanish clock,' concluded the Inspector.

'Your humour's heavy, Joseph. Heavy. She said that because—well, respectability ends at midnight.'

'Very likely. This burglary took place just at midnight. A servant got a glimpse of the fellow vanishing out of the garden.'

'All this is very annoying, Joseph! Why don't you do something about these burglaries, instead of just having expensive meals with your friends and talking about them?'

'Has Munir any debts?' asked the Inspector, returning unmoved to his plate.

'Debts? He used to have, when he first joined me. I paid them off for him. A couple of hundred rupees, and he's been charging me compound interest ever since, with his confounded accounts, instead of paying me back.'

'H'm. I'm going to arrest him after lunch.'

'Are you?' said Henry dubiously. 'Better him than me, of course, but . . . .'

'Your turn will come, Henry. Don't worry. As the lunch is on you, I'll have some fruit salad.'

'Have cream with it, Joseph, and remember that one good turn deserves another . . . It isn't jail I don't like; it's the idea of hard labour. Is it *really* hard?'

'Extremely. It does people a lot of good.'

'Let's talk about something else,' said Henry.

'Very well: let's talk about tomorrow's lunch. Same place, same time; on *me*.'

'You'll be well able to afford it, Joseph; I shan't have

much appetite, and no doubt you're counting on a promotion for putting me behind the bars.'

'Promotion's very slow in our Department,' said the Inspector, shaking his head gloomily. 'I shall probably be still a plain Inspector when you come out.'

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'Well, Henry,' said Dickson, twenty-four hours later, 'it's got to be done, I'm afraid. My assistant is getting impatient. Sub-Inspector Ghulam Ali, you know; he's been working on these burglaries. He insists on an arrest.'

'He's got Munir, hasn't he? Why can't he be satisfied?'

'Munir hasn't got the right finger-prints. I wanted to give you a bit longer, but Ghulam Ali as good as told me that if you weren't an Englishman I'd be on you in a flash.'

'Insubordination!' said Henry. 'He's no business to talk to his superior officer like that. Don't stand it, Joseph!'

'I've got to stand it. Have some more beer, it'll cheer you up. I hope this affair won't be too much of a set-back to your official career. Can you take leave without pay for a few years?'

'An I. C. S. man can only be sacked for moral turpitude,' said Henry dubiously; 'I'm not sure whether the Secretary of State would put burglary in that category.'

'And what category would he put the Señorita in?' The Inspector looked at his watch. 'Well, I'd like to arrest you personally but I've another little matter to attend to. You can find your own way to the station. Ask for Ghulam Ali; I'll be along presently, and we can get the formalities over. You can be bailed out after a while, you know.'

'Not much thrill about this,' remarked Henry, getting up. 'You might at least have provided an escort to march me through the streets. Can't you lend me a pair of handcuffs even?'



'Ghulam Ali will be glad to. I'll trouble you for the key of your house, by the way. Well, so long,' said Dickson, shaking hands. 'You ought to feel grateful that you're a young man with a lot of agreeable memories to pass your time with.'

Henry walked towards the police-station at a leisurely rate, his head slightly hazy with beer and sunshine, trying to think of some lawyer among his acquaintance who was not an ass. The sipahi at the entrance failed to recognize him as a hardened criminal, and it was only after making his way in and button-holing several clerks that he was able to make his business clear.

'Mr. Burdash—oh yes,' said the third clerk. 'Inspector Dickson telephoned about you.'

'Mr. Ghulam Ali about?'

'He'll come soon.' The clerk opened the door of an office. 'Please take your seat here and wait a few minutes.'

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The Inspector hung up the receiver, came out of the shop and stood on the kerb gazing down at the roadway as though in search of inspiration.

'Joseph!' said his wife, appearing at his elbow, 'I need some money.'

'Ah, who doesn't?' returned the Inspector philosophically. 'Well,' he added, realizing that philosophy would be a waste of time, 'I could let you have five rupees, perhaps, but I'm rather—'

'Call it one thousand, and you can be as busy as you like.'

'Sophia, this really isn't the time of day for humour.'

'Joseph,' said his wife still more firmly, 'there's a reward of one thousand rupees for these ornaments, and we're entitled to it.'

'Are we?' ejaculated the astonished Dickson. 'What about Patel?'

'What did *he* do? Nothing but have a stroke of fool's luck! Who's done the work? Who always does *all* the work, for a wretched salary that keeps a man saying No to his wife all the year round?'

## THE SEÑORITA

'Come, come; you know very well I can't take the reward.'

'I see that,' said Mrs. Dickson persuasively; 'that's why I'm suggesting that I should take it.'

'And what the deuce have *you* done?' 'I've followed the whole case, haven't I? And besides . . . for instance, this morning I went and had a chat with Henry's Señorita. Does that interest you at all, Joseph?'

'Meddling again!' said the Inspector severely. 'A woman's place is in the home, Sophia.'

'Yes, and it's the Home I want that thousand rupees for. My Home needs money so badly, Joseph!'

'So does mine. No, Sophia, put it out of your head straightaway. Still, as you *have* been meddling, I wouldn't mind being told where the Señorita is just now.'

'I could make a guess, Joseph, if you made it worth my while.'

'Once for all—no. Now, if you really know where she is . . .'

'Dear Joseph, I was only foxing,' said his wife, taking his arm affectionately. 'I've no idea. Suppose we have a look at Henry's place?'

'We might try.'

They found a small envelope lying on the verandah of Henry's deserted bungalow. Mrs. Dickson picked it up.

'Is that from the Señorita, do you suppose?' queried the Inspector.

'It's from *some* woman, so we're in duty bound to open it,' said his wife, slitting it open.

'Well? Let's have a look!'

'Aha,' said Mrs. Dickson meditatively. 'The Señorita is coming to see Henry at four o'clock, and wants him to keep it a dead secret.'

Dickson rubbed his chin. 'An interesting interview—if only Henry was here to take part in it.'

'I have an idea,' said his wife thoughtfully. 'You

could bail him out, and stay in the next room yourself and listen.'

'Not bad! Pretty amusing it would be, eh? The sheep and the goat baaing in chorus—and then J. Dickson, C.I.D., steps out from behind the curtain!'

'Let's find a place for you to hide!' exclaimed Mrs. Dickson. The Inspector produced the key, and opened the door. 'Now, the thrilling interview will take place in Henry's study.'

'How d'you know?'

'Because it's the only room where you can't be seen through the window from the road. You can bet Henry knows that, and it won't take the Señorita five minutes to find out. So if you hide in the lumber-room—come in here, Joseph. This box near the door . . . sit with your knees pulled up; yes, now I can pull these old coats in front of you, and you're invisible. That's right!'

'D'you expect me to crouch here like this for hours while you go and send for the beggar! I'll be dead of cramp and dust!' Dickson sneezed loudly.

'I'll have him here inside twenty minutes. It's just three-forty now. No, don't move out! You won't be able to cover yourself up properly alone, and they're sure to look into the room. Stop snuffling and sneezing, Joseph!'

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Henry had a long wait before the door opened, but at last a burly uniformed figure appeared.

'Mr. Ghulam Ali?' enquired the prisoner.

'That's right,' responded the newcomer jovially. 'Sorry to keep you waiting all this time, Mr. Burdash.'

'My time is yours,' replied Henry resignedly, holding out his hand, and was rather surprised when the Sub-Inspector shook it heartily.

'Mr. Dickson told me you would be having the—er—handcuffs.'

'Handcuffs? . . . Oh, you mean the bracelets!'

Mr. Ghulam Ali had rounded off his police training with a thorough course of gangster films. 'Ha, ha, ha!'

'I love a good joke,' said Henry, puzzled.

'I know you do, Mr. Burdash. Ha, ha! And so do we!'

'I'm glad to hear it, but . . . .'

'Sit down, sit down! Yes; Mr. Dickson said he wanted to show you that the police have a sense of humour too. Suppose I tell you the whole thing, Mr. Burdash, in—in—what do you say?'

'In confidence?'

'No, no—in an eggshell, that's it. We got the whole story by arresting your man Munir, you know. I can say I knew it already, but Mr. Dickson wasn't satisfied. I've been doing a good deal of work on this case, Mr. Burdash, while the public thought I was asleep. Mr. Dickson knew me better, though; we've worked together a long time. I remember one time . . . .'

'Do you mind if we get back to the eggshell?' Henry interposed. 'I'm very curious to know . . . .'

'Of course you are, Mr. Burdash. Levity is the soul of wit, as Shakespeare says. Well, I had already pinned the burglaries on to a Kabuli moneylender, named Zaid Khan. He is an old bad cap, but he's been hiding in Bombay the last few years—where all our bad caps go . . . . Mr. Burdash, is that right?'

'You know better than I do, I'm sure.'

'No, no—you are an Englishman; bad cap? mad cap? We are taught English so badly.'

'Oh, I see. Mad hat—no, *bad* hat, I mean. But what were you saying?'

'Thank you, yes, bad hat. Bad hat. Yes, this bad hat was organizing the thefts. Munir was one of a set of servants Zaid Khan—the bad hat, bad hat—had got into his crutches by lending them a few chips and taking five hundred per cent interest off them for the rest of their lives. He had one man in each of the houses that were burgled.'

'Oh! But as I told the Inspector, I paid off Munir's debts years ago.'

'You can't pay off a Pathan moneylender, Mr. Burdash. They come along with big sticks and

frighten people by saying they'll send someone to their villages to beat up their families or catch their sisters. I could have arrested the bad hat, you know, but we had to find out two things—who was doing his thinking for him, and who was hiding the stuff for him.'

'Well, who was?'

The Sub-Inspector twirled his moustaches complacently.

'That Spanish man Toledano was doing the thinking, and *you* were doing the hiding. That is, Munir was doing it for you. We knew Toledano had been meeting the bad hat, and we found the stuff at your house. So the—what do you call it, Mr. Burdash?'

'What do *you* call it?' asked Henry guardedly.

'Missing link—yes, the missing link seemed to be your friend the Spanish lady.' He twirled his moustaches again, and gave Henry an arch look.

'Yes, yes,' responded the latter hastily; 'but—why did you have to suspect her as well?'

'Mr. Dickson is suspicious of all foreigners, and Mrs. Dickson is suspicious of all women. She gives us a lot of useful advice, Mr. Burdash. Well, I was going to say . . . on Thursday night, when you went to the lady's house, you were shaded.'

'What? Shaded?'

'Shaded, I mean of course—yes, shaded.'

'By the gang?'

'No, Mr. Burdash. By the C.I.D.'

'Dash it! Mr. Dickson promised not to!'

'I know,' replied the Sub-Inspector calmly. 'He said that a transparent lie will often do as well as a better one. He wanted you to repeat it to the young lady, so as to see whether another burglary would happen, and it did.'

'Still, that doesn't quite prove . . . ' Henry was beginning, when the door opened again and Mrs. Dickson appeared.

'We'll soon see about proving it,' said the Sub-Inspector confidently, getting up to go. 'We arrested

Toledano and the bad hat this morning. Now I must go and talk to them. So, goodbye, Mr. Burdash, and many thanks for your help!

'Well, Henry,' remarked Mrs. Dickson as the door closed, 'you see what a fool you've been?'

'Let's go and have tea, Sophia; I want to enjoy my return to freedom. Come along, I'll give you chicken sandwiches, as you were going to give *me* some.'

'Wouldn't you like to say goodbye to your Señorita? They'll be bringing her in before long, I expect.'

'In bracelets?' asked Henry with a frown.

'What? Oh, handcuffs, you mean. That sort of slang is out of fashion in the police force.'

'Look here, Sophia, I wish you could throw off your anti-feminist prejudices for a minute. I'm sure the poor creature didn't have anything to do with it. Or Toledano may have dragged her in . . . . But her eyes, Sophia . . . .'

'What about them?'

'I've seen them at fairly close range. Don't misunderstand me! Spanish grammars aren't easily got in Simla, so occasionally we had to sit close together, you know, sharing the same book.'

'Cut it out. What about her eyes?'

'They were the eyes of a good woman.'

'Then why were you wasting your time hanging about her?'

'I mean a good woman in the broader sense of the phrase.'

'You mean a woman in love with Henry Burdash, who should therefore be let off—eh? Henry. I'll give you a chance to convince yourself. Come with me, and get two rickshaws; hurry up!'

'Where are we going?' cried Henry as they hastened out of the buildings; 'to her house?'

'No, to mine. Henry, you stop out of sight of the house and walk the rest of the way.'

Mystified, Henry reached the house, and was rapidly conducted into the Inspector's study.

'I've got the servants out of the way,' said

Mrs. Dickson, handing him a note. 'Now, read that.' Henry ran a hasty eye over it.

'So she's coming here!' he exclaimed. 'At four o'clock—in five minutes! I say, doesn't Joseph mind your opening his letters?'

'Don't know; I've never asked him,' returned Mrs. Dickson briefly. 'Yes, she's coming here at four, and wants him to keep it a secret. From *me*, obviously. In other words, she's coming here to throw herself on his generosity—fall at his feet—show him her honest eyes, Henry . . . . Don't you think it would be fun to listen?'

'*Fun?* Such a pathetic spectacle? Well . . . .' Henry smiled; 'yes, it *would* be on the comic side.' He laughed. 'Our incorruptible Joseph with the Señorita, eh!'

Mrs. Dickson took his arm.

'Come through here, Henry. If you stay in the bedroom here—look, this wardrobe's empty; stand inside—that's right; you'll be able to hear every word. You'll soon learn the truth about your damsel.'

'It's rather cramped inside this wardrobe, though. Aren't you staying to listen in?'

'I'll listen from the bedroom on the other side.'

'Why not here?'

'I'm not exactly old enough to be your grandmother,' said Mrs. Dickson with some irritation. 'There's such a thing as propriety, Henry.'

'Certainly,' replied Henry with a sneeze, 'and there's such a thing as dust. But Joseph isn't in the house, is he?'

'I know where he is; I'm just going to ring him up. He'll be here by the time she comes.' Mrs. Dickson shut the door. 'And don't come out till I call you! The servants might see you. Propriety, Henry.'

Henry sneezed again.

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An hour and a half later Mrs. Dickson made her way into Henry's bungalow, and found him and her husband

eyeing each other querulously over a bottle of sherry just brought in by a crestfallen Munir.

'*Sophia!*' exclaimed the Inspector, jumping up and banging the table. 'What d'you mean by playing these tricks? And where *is* that woman!'

'Vanished,' replied his wife casually. 'Do sit down. I thought I'd run down and see her off at the station.'

'What! How did you know she was there?'

Mrs. Dickson shrugged her shoulders.

'Give me some sherry, Henry . . . . Oh, when I saw both her notes I knew she must have sent them to keep you both at home about four o'clock, and as the Kalka train leaves at four-fifteen . . . .'

'Why on earth didn't you have her stopped?'

'Didn't you tell me not to meddle, Joseph?'

'I'll have her yet,' said the Inspector grimly. 'Let me do a bit of telephoning. I'll send a message to Kalka. I'll send a car, by Jove! It'll be there long before the train.'

'Look here,' cried Henry, '*must* you go on persecuting her? Take my word for it . . . .'

'Fiddlesticks,' replied the Inspector, banging the door behind him.

'Sophia, have *you* no heart! My poor Amparito, shut up in a solitary cell . . . .'

'*Her* cell won't be solitary for long, Henry. Well, you needn't worry. She isn't on that train.'

'Eh?'

'I only told Joseph she was at the station . . . . She'll go tomorrow, when the coast's clear.'

'Good! So you *were* convinced of her innocence!'

'Far from it. But I rather liked her in a way. She has some spirit. I felt there ought to be a few young women like that going about, to teach young men like you a lesson. She thought you a great joke, Henry.'

'Oh, did she? . . . . I think I'll have some more sherry.'

'I've settled her hash all right!' exclaimed the



Inspector, returning triumphantly. 'But what on earth were you talking to her about at the station, Sophia?'

'Finance, my dear. As *you* won't give me anything for my Home . . . .'

'Good God!' He banged the table again. 'Do you mean to say you took a *bribe* off her.'

'Don't get so excited, Joseph. I went to see her out of devotion to Henry's interests. I guessed from seeing her before that she was too clever to be content with petty larceny—or with Henry's salary; so what else could she be after? Think, Henry.'

'I might have risked a guess five minutes ago,' said Henry modestly, 'but if she really thought me a *joke* . . . .'

'She wanted to pump information out of you, of course; tips from the Finance Department that might be useful on the Exchange; straight from the donkey's mouth. Did bulls and bears ever come into those Spanish lessons of yours?'

'A little; now you mention it. It wasn't *my* idea; I wanted to keep them running on what you might call more *human* topics—you know, the sort of things that help to break the ice.'

'There isn't much ice in Spain, Henry.'

'But she thought I ought to learn the Spanish for things like taxes and exchequers and premiums, and so on.'

'Well, she's on her way to Bombay to meet some friends who have been busy selling coal shares. Does that suggest anything to you?'

'It suggests something to *me*!' cried the Inspector. 'Coal shares have gone down ten points in the last three weeks, and I own a thousand of them. Which means that I've lost . . . .'

'Ah. You'd better sell them all, Joseph; run back to the telephone!' exclaimed his wife.

The Inspector breathed heavily.

'If I do that I shall be using information obtained dishonestly; and if I don't . . . .'

'Wait a minute,' broke in Henry; 'I believe light is

dawning on me . . . . Yes, of course! Joseph, have a soothing cigar, and let me explain things.'

'It's about time some light dawned on that mind of yours,' growled Dickson. 'Well?'

'I may be a fool,' began Henry with a touch of complacency; 'I dare say you both think me one; but a man learns something by knocking about the world. For instance, there's no possible situation in which you can be with a woman,' he proceeded, taking a sip at his sherry and warming to his theme, 'in which it can be the right policy to tell her the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Correct, Sophia?'

'You'd better do it now, all the same,' said Mrs. Dickson acidly.

'In all my little flirtations,' went on the imperturbable Henry, 'I have aimed at mutual confidence. It brings the best out of women. I always give them the benefit of the doubt, and assume them to be as frank and honest and truthful as *I* am. But not *more* than I am. That would be going too far.'

'You're going too far now,' interrupted the exasperated Dickson. 'Get on; what did you tell her?'

'Well, when she showed a childlike interest in my work, and wanted to know what plans my Department was making for the good of this beautiful country, and so on, I told her I had been writing a long minute in favour of a huge capital levy on the coal industry, to pay for amenities for the labourers. I may have glowed over it a bit,' he added, taking another sip; 'it was a fine piece of writing, Joseph, and when you have a pretty young woman admiring you . . . I may possibly have given her the impression that the Government had taken up my scheme with enthusiasm. There was no point in telling her that my boss had put it in the waste-paper basket and told me to mind my own business. Your shares will go up again all right.'

The Inspector drew a deep breath, and reached for the sherry.

'Henry,' he said, wiping his forehead, 'this isn't the

first time you've had me wondering whether you were a deep young fellow or a damned young fool.'

'I was wondering that about *you* today at lunch, when you sent me off to the lock-up so coolly. Ah, well; let's go out and have some dinner. Munir.'

'Not many people would be silly enough to go on employing such a chap,' remarked Dickson, eyeing the tongue-tied Munir as he came in and dropped the first sherry-glass he picked up. 'I've stretched a point, as he didn't actually commit any thefts himself . . . .'

'And that was only because Henry had nothing worth stealing,' put in Mrs. Dickson.

'I had my Amparito,' said Henry with a sentimental sigh, 'and your husband has stolen her. Poor thing; she sang me a sweet little song one night. *La lumbre, la lumbre*, well, it meant: There is no more fire in the hearth, there is no more oil in the lamp; I do not tell you to stay, I do not tell you to go . . . . Pretty, eh?'

'Very,' answered Mrs. Dickson. 'Which did you do, Henry?'

'I did the right thing, Sophia . . . . Tell me, how old do you think she was, honestly? She seemed such a child.'

'A woman is never too young to have a past, Henry,' said the Inspector sententiously. 'Anyway, I suggest it's time for you to think of turning over a new leaf.'

'You're right. Let's go to Davico's for dinner. When we were there on Wednesday, Sophia, we saw a girl in a green dress . . . .'

'Did *you* see her?' said Mrs. Dickson to her husband.

'No,' replied the latter; 'and to judge by her looks. Henry would be well advised to steer clear of her.'

Munir was making an unobtrusive exit.

'Ah!' exclaimed Henry. 'That reminds me.' He gave his man a commanding look. 'Munir! *Hisab lao!*'

Munir returned with unwonted speed, carrying his bulky account-book. Henry turned the pages with an air of careless authority, and ran his finger down a column at random.

'Some mistakes here!' he said severely. 'This chicken, Munir. Cross it out.'

*'Achchhi bat, huzoor.'*

'And this coffee item. The price of a quarter pound of coffee, Munir, is . . . .' (he glanced towards Mrs. Dickson, who held up six fingers) '. . . . is six rupees. Put this right. I'll see it again tomorrow. *Bas!* Salaam.'

'Salaam, huzoor.' Munir left humbly.

'That'll teach him a lesson,' remarked Henry with much satisfaction.

'Why couldn't you leave it to me?' said Mrs. Dickson. 'What a fool you are, Henry—six annas, not six rupees.'

'Oh! Well, I'll put it right tomorrow. Let's be off. We must pick up Patel and give him a feast.'

'Go ahead, then,' said Mrs. Dickson; 'I've just to telephone to someone.'

'Come along, Joseph! A man is never too old to have a future . . . . You know, Munir isn't such a bad chap, but his putting my finger—prints on that stuff was rather an unkind cut. I suppose he did it the night I was brought home in a rickshaw.'

'No need for any ill-feeling about *that!*' said the Inspector with a laugh. 'The finger-prints were all imaginary—just part of my programme of giving you a sharp lesson.'

'Pretty cool of you, Joseph!' Henry laughed himself. 'It seems to me too many people have been trying to teach someone else a lesson, from Amparito downwards. Well, let's see what sort of lesson that girl in green can teach us.'

'Whom were you telephoning to?' enquired the Inspector, as his wife caught up with them.

'Oh, nobody . . . . Well, as my Home is in such need of money, dear, I just telephoned to a broker and asked him to buy me some coal shares while they were cheap.'

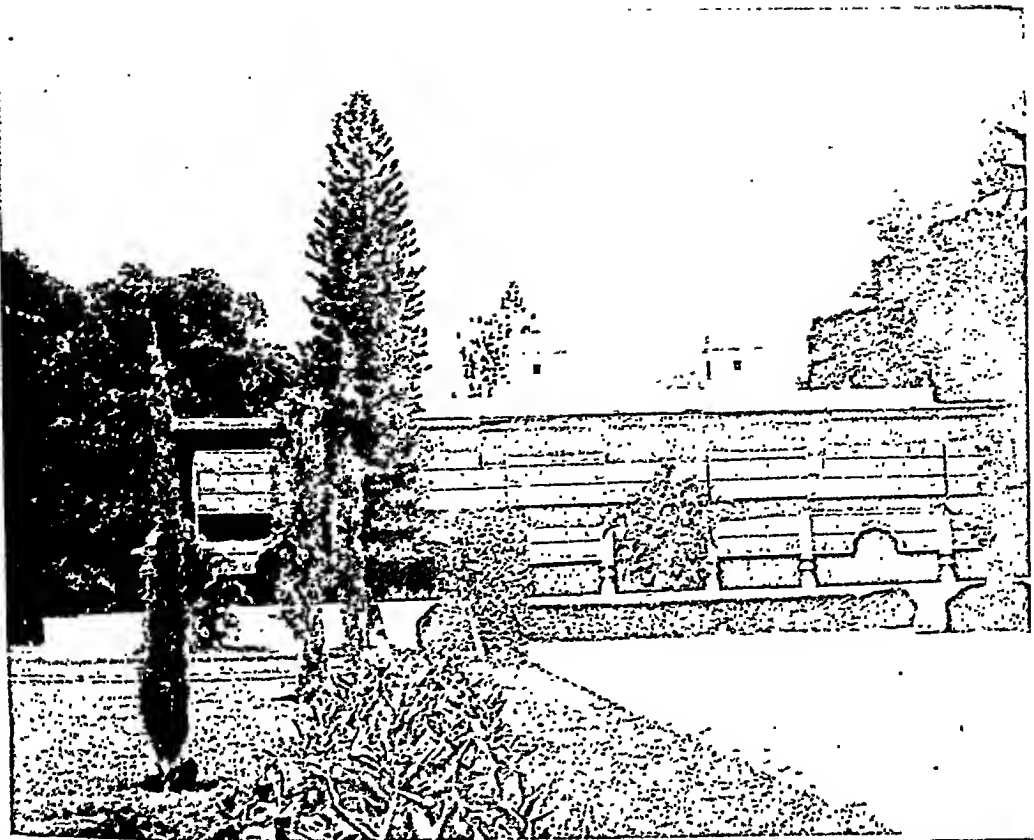
## DARIA DOWLAT BAGH

ONE of the most beautiful spots in the ‘Island of Haunting Memories’, Seringapatam, is its Daria Dowlat Bagh. Planted in 1784 by Tippu Sultan, the ‘Tiger of Mysore’, it was fondly called by him the ‘Garden Palace of the Wealth of the Sea’; a name born out of Tippu’s imagination as there is nothing marine in or around it.

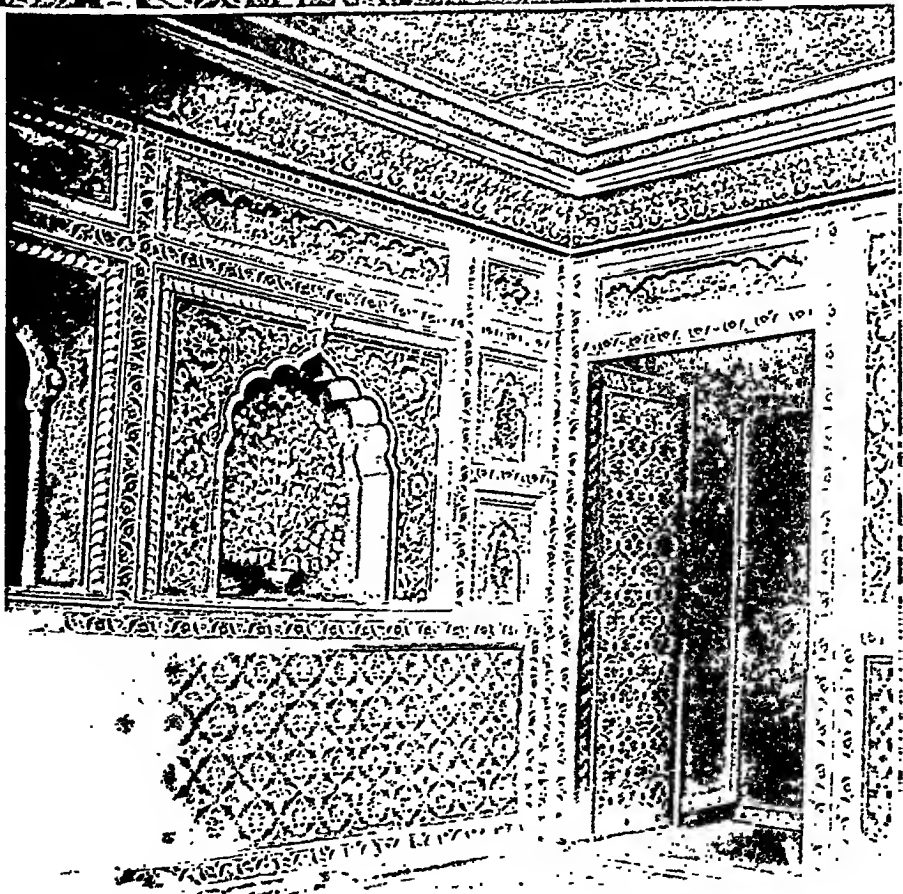
The Daria Dowlat Bagh was planned by Tippu Sultan to commemorate his and his father Hyder Ali’s lucky escape. Some years previously, on the spot where the garden stands, Tippu Sultan, his father and his family were trapped by a Hindu General named Khande Rao. Destruction was imminent, but Hyder Ali, with his usual tact, sent a flag of truce to his attackers and while negotiations were going on, escaped by rowing across the Cauvery. He left behind him in the camp his family and his entire treasure. Some months later, he was able to muster a huge army, defeat Khande Rao and rescue the captives.

The Daria Dowlat Bagh was copied by Tippu Sultan from a Moghul garden—the garden of Dilaver Khan at Sira (Mysore State), the southernmost Viceregal capital of the Moghul Empire. The men who designed and built it were captive artisans from that place.

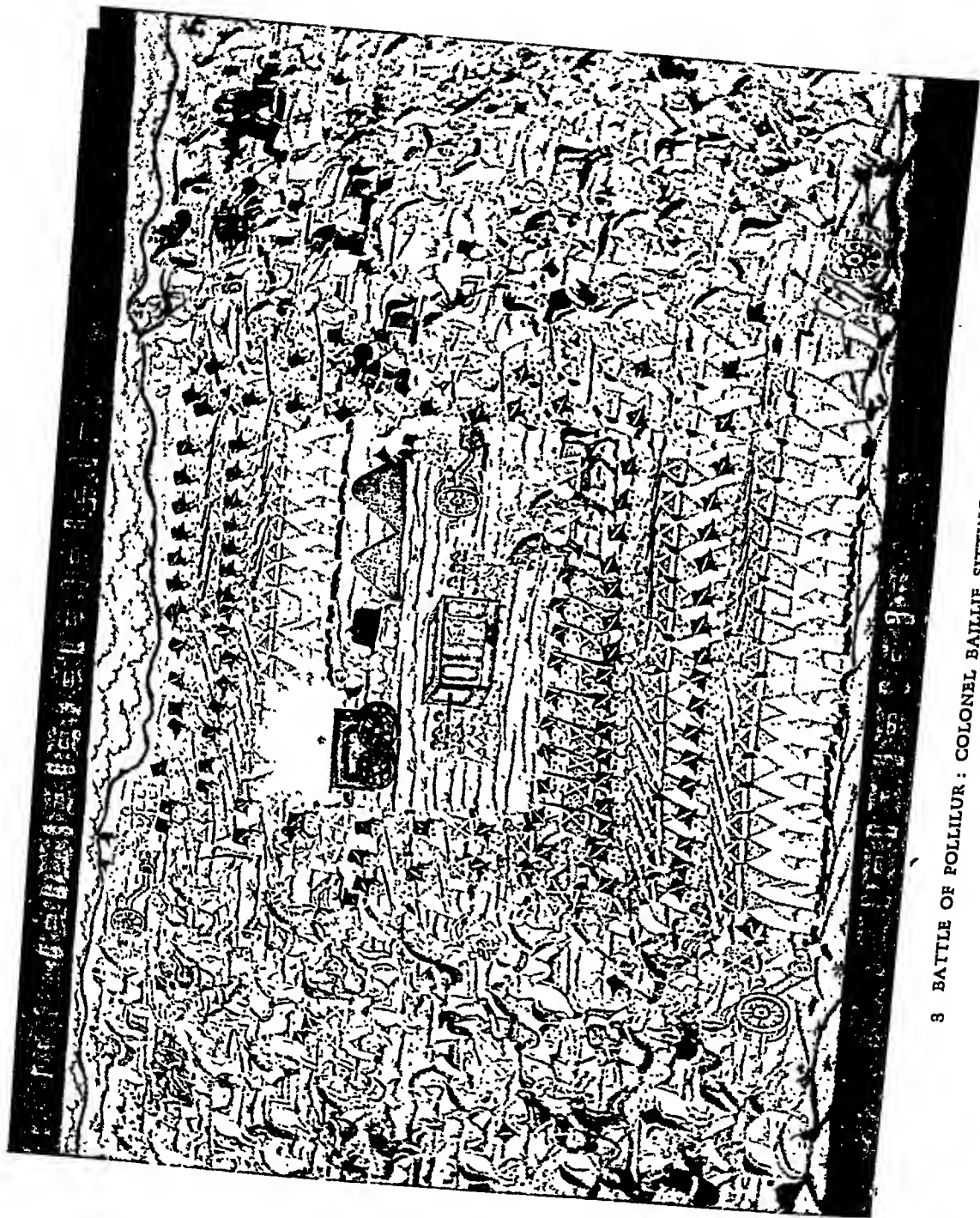
The Garden is beautifully kept and it must have been still more beautiful in the Sultan’s time. Tippu Sultan, it is interesting to record, was extremely fond of plants and flowers and one of his historians has stated that he regularly used to send his agents to Lahore, Delhi, Afghanistan and even distant Persia for the sole purpose of bringing back rare seeds and plants.



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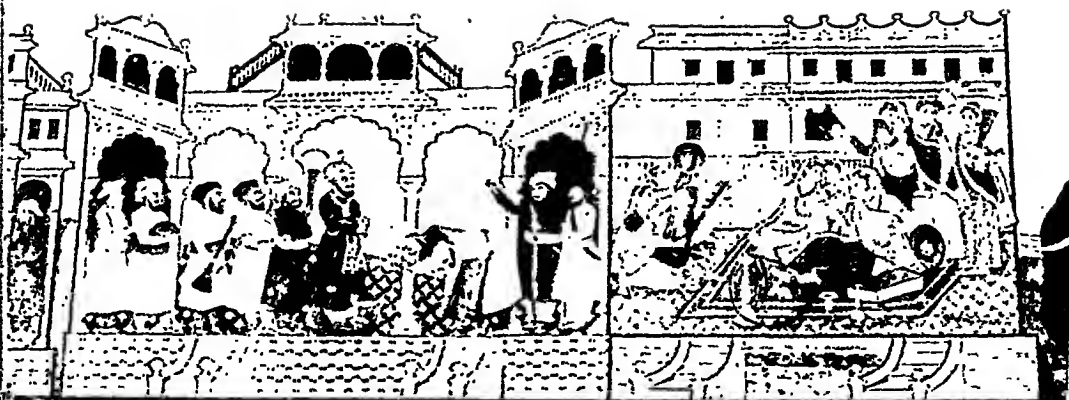


3 BATTLE OF POLLILUR : COLONEL BAILLIE SITTING IN THE PALANQUIN



4 TIPU SULTAN REVIEWING HIS TROOPS





Photographs  
by the  
Author

And, what is more amazing, many of the Sultan's favourite plants were nourished daily with milk, sugar, curds and cocoanut milk!

The garden is now under the care of the Horticultural Department of the Government of Mysore. Its situation, by the bank of the river Cauvery, with a background of blue hills and verdant fields, lends it an exquisite air.

In the centre of the garden is Tippu Sultan's Summer Palace, built of wood. This was the Sultan's favourite residence during his leisure hours and he would spend them here, in the strictest privacy, with the ladies of his Zenana.

This Summer Palace of Tippu Sultan is the most colourful building in the whole of South India. All its walls, pillars, balconies, ceilings and arches are covered with bizarre designs in colour. Not a single square inch is left undecorated. The work was done by native Mysore artists under the commands of Tippu Sultan. An enormous amount of patience they must have had, considering the intricate designs they have reproduced.

Many of the decorations are in gold colour and not a grain of gold has been used in producing them. Tippu Sultan's artists were experts in false gilding and used to producing bright golden colour with very cheap materials. About six materials were used for the preparation of this colour, the chief among them being linseed oil and yellow resin. A composition called *gunna* was prepared out of them. The *gunna* was mixed with thin sheets of tin and liquified glue and beaten together. The resultant mass was applied to the walls and rubbed with a serpentine stone and then exposed to daylight for two days, after which time it acquired a bright golden colour, hardly different from the colour of actual gold.

The inside walls of this palace contain huge frescoes. The fresco on the eastern wall is divided into a number of panels and each panel contains the portrait of a ruling chief of Tippu Sultan's time. Some panels

opposite 5. LIFE IN THE COURT 6. DETAIL FROM BATTLE FRESCO

contain interesting pictures of life in Tippu's court. Even his Zenana is exposed to our gaze as there are half a dozen pictures depicting the way in which Tippu Sultan's wives spent their time. The wall on the western side contains two frescoes. One shows a royal procession at Seringapatam. Hyder and Tippu are depicted riding at the head of their troops. Following them are viziers and courtiers.

The second fresco, and by far the most interesting of the paintings of the Daria Dowlat Bagh, is of the Battle of Pollilur, fought between the troops of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan and those of Colonel Baillie on 10 September, 1780, in which the Mysore forces were successful. There was enormous slaughter of Baillie's troops by Hyder's overwhelmingly superior forces. Baillie surrendered in the end. The battle scene, though painted without any sense of proportion or perspective, is interesting enough. Colonel Baillie's square is attacked from the front and the rear and there is great slaughter. Inside the square, a powder-dump is exploding. A little distance from it, seated in a palanquin, is Colonel Baillie himself. He is shown with a stalk of grass held between his teeth—the artist's depiction of the sign of submission.

Colonel Walter Campbell, who saw the frescoes as they were in 1833, writes of them :

The subject of the painting is supposed to be a faithful representation of one of Tippu's victories over the British troops. It exhibits a glorious contempt for anything like perspective or proportion ; but what it lacks in correct drawing is amply made amends for by variety and brilliancy of colouring. Pink elephants, yellow men and sky-blue horses with yellow feet and scarlet tails are jumbled together in glorious confusion.

The British are of course flying in terror pursued by native horsemen ; and are being trampled under the feet of victorious elephants. Among the fugitives the artist has not forgotten to introduce a group of native servants ; and by a stroke of fine art, to distinguish them from the crowd of camp-followers and others, by representing each man with an immense tea-kettle in one hand and a gigantic brandy bottle in the other.

After the final capture of the city and its subsequent sack, the Daria Dowlat Bagh fell into hopeless ruin and the once beautiful garden was laid desolate. But Colonel Wellesley (afterward the Duke of Wellington), who resided in it for some time, restored it to its original splendour.

*Sudhindranath Datta*

### THREE POEMS

#### CAMEL-BIRD

##### I

You hear me well : and yet you try  
To hide within the desert's fold.  
Here shadows shrink until they die,  
While dead horizons cannot hold  
The quick mirage, and, never near,  
The cruel sky is mute and blue.  
The hunter stalks no phantom deer ;  
He loses all by losing you.  
The sands are heedless. Why run on,  
When tell-tale footprints point your way ?  
Your prehistoric friends are gone,  
And, all alone, you stand at bay.

##### II

By brooding on a broken egg  
You cannot hatch or make it whole :  
The self-consuming hunger's peg,  
You play in void a dual role.

Become, instead, my wilful ark  
 Upon the chartless sea of sand;  
 For danger you refuse to mark,  
 Although you know the lie of land.  
 Come, let us seek a new retreat,  
 Enclosed in thorn and scorched all through,  
 Where trickles water, if not sweet;  
 The earth attracts a date or two.

### III

No wishful creeper shall I grow  
 To keep your iron cage concealed,  
 Nor call in hucksters who would know  
 What price your useless wings should yield.  
 With moulted feathers I shall make  
 A fan to suit the anchorite,  
 But out of fibrils never rake  
 The dust once raised by stads in flight.  
 My apprehensions shall prevail :  
 Your runic cry will not suborn :  
 For you are not the Nightingale  
 Who lulls to feed on mortgaged corn.

### IV

This ruin is our heritance :  
 A line of spendthrifts went before ;  
 They picked the pounds, and left no pence :  
 Now both of us must pay their score.  
 And so your self-absorption seems  
 Inept : can blindness cheat a cure ?  
 The present is no time for dream :  
 By shunning me you make bad worse.  
 Let each of us then seal a bond  
 To serve the other's interest :  
 You speed me to the world beyond,  
 While I prepare the hour of need.

## ANTINOMIES

PERHAPS no God exists : Creation, born a waif,  
 Remains unruly still ; decreasing order lends  
 A clue to time's accretions ; self-absorption rends  
 The heavens waxing fast ; and chance embraces chafe  
 The living whose coition pairs disease with death.  
 Yet instincts keep their courses ; Science grows, because  
 Coy Nature loves her old wiles ; contrapuntal flaws  
 Uphold perfection ; earth compels no shibboleth.  
 And so, when void rejects my prayers, they echo back,  
 Occult and clippt like prophecy, and Fortune seems  
 No more outrageous than a looking glass where lack  
 Is plenty's mirror image, facts are bonded dreams.  
 Thereafter suffering avails : while I disburse  
 The wages of her sin, she ransoms Adam's curse.

## THE FOOL

TO BE a tragic hero was my early dream :  
 I saw myself in single combat-braving fate ;  
 And since, mortal born, I reaped immortal hate,  
 The sure catharsis yet would sanctify the theme,  
 And anarchs, facing frantic odds, would imitate  
 My fabled life. For high as Christ's my name would  
rate  
 In times to come, when all would bless and none  
blaspheme.  
 The last act starts, as finally the footlights flare ;  
 The prating puppets, massed, obey the leading string ;  
 Producers mock and squabble off stage : do I dare,  
 Their comedy of errors having made me King ?  
 However, chance is blind ; and, when she drags the pool,  
 In Love's Revenge I come to play the sleepy fool.

*Translated from the Bengali by THE AUTHOR.*

# SANTAL LOVE SONGS

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## I

I WENT by paths  
And met her in the way  
She said to me  
Give me a red flower.

## II

OVER the mountains  
The five mountains  
Two pomegranates are in bloom  
Were my girl with me  
I would put the blossom in her hair.

## III

THE OWL calls kor kor  
The kingfisher kir kir  
Where did you catch them with your lime?  
In the field I caught them  
Where once we had our love.

## IV

TO EAT figs  
You took me to a strange forest  
We have eaten figs  
We have come back  
I could not think  
You would not keep me.

V

THE WIND goes  
Over the hill  
And the rain drifts down  
O my love  
The thatch of the big house  
Was carried far away  
And the rain  
Is dripping down.

VI

O MY LOVE  
Let me come  
From the house to the street  
I will make your water flow  
To the depth of a hand.

VII

O MY LOVE, you are taking me  
Over the two rivers  
If one day you do not keep me  
I will go  
To my father's house.

VIII

GIRL, black as jamun berries  
Is the rain coming  
O uncle, are you uncle  
Or shall I call you lover?  
The waters of two countries  
Are flowing into one.



## IX

HIGH on the mountain  
Do not play your flute  
In the valley  
Is a spring with stones  
Do not dirty  
The water of the spring.

## X

I WENT for water  
To the spring in the river  
You flicked your eyebrows  
You said  
Give me water  
I will give you water  
In a broken cup  
But do not  
Speak to me like that.

## XI

FUMBLE at the door  
Then for the legs of the cot  
O my love  
Grobe your way in  
To the legs of the inner door.

*Translated by W. G. ARCHER.*

I WANT to tell you of something I saw in Delhi last summer. I want to place the whole affair on record, if only in my mind and yours, because I feel that, however commonplace the story, however tediously familiar it may sound that a boy should meet a girl in wartime, there clung a flavour to such things in the Delhi of '43 which the passage of time will make more and more elusive. Already I wonder that it could have happened like this: perhaps soon I shall disbelieve. I think not, however. Heaven knows, the little episode is remote enough from the vitalities of modern India; soon, I think, such affairs will share, though in a gentler, fainter way, the half-legendary quality of those that flowered in the high days of the Moghuls. Leisure and privilege, that nourish them, are rarer now for the British in India, and the whole pattern of airy assumption and unquestioning compliance that made the leisured life possible is dissolving as the English mind awakens to uneasiness and the Indian to outrage. Only change, and very difficult change, can save the Raj now. If and when there should be such change, then old Sir Charles and young Diana will belong in whatever limbo envelops Shah Jahan and Roshanara.

Yes, Delhi in '43 was in a curious state. G. H. Q. was there of course, swarming all over the Secretariat, and the warren of military offices that was soon to clutter its approaches was spreading fast. But you know the popular theory about static H. Q.'s—the heavier their task, people say, the more blandly indifferent they become to events in the forward areas. Perhaps it's a libel, or more probably a crude misconception arising from the nature of military technique,

but I must say it looked unusually true of Delhi. A silence had somehow fallen on the disasters of '42, which the monotonous scurry of recruitment and training, and the thickening rash of camps and aerodromes, did nothing to relieve. Far to the east, forlorn little installations descended and multiplied in the fastnesses of Assam and eastern Bengal, and a gathering khaki slum diversified the squalor of Chittagong. To the south, an ill-found army vainly piled up its dead before the well-sited bunkers of the Donbaik peninsula, evoking little but a ripple of criticism in messes and training schools, and from the interior of Jap-held Burma there began to trail back the first of Wingate's men, whose achievement paled before the evidence of their suffering. Bengal had lost a million lives in the famine besides an unthinkable number ruined in its aftermath, and for a time it seemed almost possible that the horror and misery of the thing would come to life in people's minds. But all this was below the horizon of Delhi. It was over 100° in the shade, a perpetual afternoon seemed to hang over these broad, tree-lined avenues, and a fierce sun beat impartially through official windows and the tiled arches of abandoned ruins. People were thinking of the hill-stations, booking berths and taxis and rooms, and those uncouponed dresses that would soon grace the dance-floors of Mussoorie and Srinagar were nearly ready. Their wearers' complexions would hardly survive another hot season on the plains. Parties thinned out, and though the few available swimming-baths gained patrons, the latter were mostly troops off duty. Delhi sank back with a becoming listlessness to drowse away the off season to the accompaniment of the viceregal court's move to Simla and a tinkle of petulant enquiries about air-conditioning on the north-bound trains.

It must have been in August that Alan Sanderson arrived. I saw a little of his battalion in the Arakan, though thank God I had nothing to do with that ghastly fiasco of an attack on Point 372, not far from

Buthidaung, where he got his wounds. It wasn't his fault. Had that attack been less of a shambles, I gathered that Alan might have secured a mention or possibly an M.C. As it was, he was lucky to escape the attentions of a psychiatrist after three months in hospital and permanent downgrading to category B3. For some time he didn't seem too happy in Delhi. From what I learnt, I should say that he had every right to be in a snug job, and that the qualms of conscience that assailed, or should have troubled him. Like nearly all who had served there, he hated the Arakan and he had been badly shaken, so that if he did wish to go back there, as I believe for some time he did, it was the kind of wish that emerges from a taut conscience and a troubled and restless mind. (Who am I to reproach headquarter soldiers, who have seen so little action myself? Possibly, being one of them for reasons that leave me at peace, their cynicism has settled on me. I see this problem from the far distance and make no excuses, but I was fond of Alan.) Also, I do know that he was lonely. It stuck out a mile that he needed companionship. The female kind would naturally have been better but—as I've often told you—that was scarce. He was of average height, with a tidy physique, and just enough of the operational soldier about him to announce itself without obtrusiveness. He was smart without undue care. I say this because you'll be guessing that a girl would have solved his problems, as in the end Diana did, but I must add that he did nothing much to acquire one. He hardly knew where to start, knowing nobody. I too was lonely—you know why: that was how I came to know him. It had a quality of its own, that solitary feeling in Delhi. On occasional free days, when one wandered off down those straight, torrid vistas to divert oneself, it happened that he and I sought the same escape. I mean the old buildings. Architecturally, Delhi, or rather the procession of Delhis, can chart the whole story of the Moslem power in India. That's why some of the more

sensitively nationalist of its native citizens, whom I met elsewhere, could hardly bear to return to it. That also is what first endeared it to me. If you look down the long avenue from between those twin hunks of fatuous grandiosity that make up the Secretariat, your eye travels to the great arch of the War Memorial, smooth and neat as a new toy. But what, you may ask, are those craggy ruins to the right, with the two little pillared kiosks against the sky? Those, my dear, are ramparts of the Old Fort, the Purana Qila, built on a site already famous in the age of the Hindu epics. Humayun, the second Moghul, raised it and died there, and Sher Shah, that cloudily remote Colossus, held court there for a time. There I found Alan one brazen afternoon on the steep red staircase down which Humayun, fresh from his evening devotions, fell to his drunken death. For the next few weeks I saw a good deal of Alan. Sometimes we had a drink together, once or twice we saw a film, but more often I would come across him in the gracefully desolate places that attracted both of us. I had some good books on the history and art of Moslem India, and when I lent him these he read them eagerly. Not, I should imagine, that he was a keen student in the objective sense. He didn't set out to amass and organize knowledge nor, like some literary people, did he seek to make a catalogue of psychological and aesthetic values. From the moment, when I was with him, that his eye followed some stray couple by the Haus Khas, I knew his need went further than raw sex. He may not have known it, but it was romance that he was after. To this end he would pore over a variety of improbable literature in search of legend and anecdote, and this store of aromatic fancies in turn would quicken his response to the long-neglected felicities of sandstone and marble. I said he needed female company, like most of us: he needed it in the fullest and widest sense and, reacting to its absence, a part of him was engaged in distilling an exotic substitute for the precious stuff that it can give. With him, in a sense, a palace became a naive

poet's dream of a palace, and a girl, if she had the makings, verged perilously on a princess. 'Each to his taste,' I thought, mine just then being averse to this particular ingredient of happiness. He was very far gone.

Did you know old Sir Charles? I mean, of course, the head of our branch at G. H. Q., Colonel Sir Charles Hewitt. To a connoisseur of Indian Army types he was something of a rarity in that, possessing so many conventional attributes, he was so very far from being a caricature. He must have been over fifty. He had served in the last war and transferred to the Indian Army soon afterwards, going home to inherit a fortune some time in the later twenties. War had dealt gently with him this time, merely translating him from a Knightsbridge flat and an occasional board meeting to a smart bungalow and an air-conditioned office in New Delhi. I don't think anything ever bit to the bone with him—nothing for years at least. Administration tickled his intellect, and in a detached and rather donnish way he was very good at it. Firm and lucid in his despatch of any given problem, he was apt to talk of those distant, sickening flounderings that then passed as operations in much the tone that he used for the doings of the Peshawar Vale Hunt. With little to ask of people, he could afford to like them, and in handling them he was easy and adroit. He was credited with several genially caustic remarks to generals and members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, and certainly there were few people of consequence in Delhi with whom he was not on nickname terms. Press photographers would search him out at social functions, and the ensuing captions in the single fly-blown social weekly in India (*Colonel Sir Charles Hewitt, better known to his intimates as 'Humpty'*) afforded him a good deal of cynical amusement. His drawing-room contained some fine jade and a couple of first-rate Persian miniatures, and was further notable for sherry and choice gramophone records. Always neat, a certain repletion tinged his handsomeness; someone

said of him that whatever the time of day, he always appeared to have lunched well. It may sound absurd, but I've no idea whether he was ever married, and I nearly forgot to add that he was vaguely related to Alan's father. Does he sound self-sufficient? I don't think he was; I think his one use for social activity was to people his own solitude. He aged rather suddenly in '44.

Alan heard of him in a letter from his parents. I take it they suggested a meeting, and sometime later in September Sir Charles asked him out. They dined at Maiden's on a Wednesday dance night. Of what happened I afterwards gathered a part from Sir Charles, and the rest, much later, from Diana. Alan, bemused by an over-prodigious good fortune, could never have told me until too late. I've almost come to believe I was there myself, so clearly can I see Sir Charles appraising Alan, deciding and dispensing his bounty, Alan a little mystified but with nothing to lose.

'What do you do with your spare time in Delhi?'

'Read, cycle, swim a little. I've rather taken to moping around these Moghul ruins lately.'

'Moping? That's not very satisfactory. Far be it from me, of course, to interfere with these historical hankerings. In civilized circles it's usual, though deplorable, to ignore that aspect of India. One always does so in public. However, you don't seem to belong to the Philistine majority. You mope. Do you enjoy it?'

Alan's eyes strayed round the tables bordering the dance-floor. Sir Charles sat watching him.

'In a way, yes. I suppose it's just escapism.'

'It is, of course it is. But never mind that. So's everything, from everything else. Anyway, it's an innocuous form of escapism. I once had a G.I.I. who took up Yoga. It was rather embarrassing for the clerks. Then there was a fellow who took to Tantric practices and before I could tell you what that involved we should have to go to the cloakroom. Possibly further. Distressing.' He paused. 'Perhaps it's just as well,' he

went on, 'that the Moslem tradition's so strong round here. Would you really like to study it? If so, I know a man who could help. Would that amuse you?'

Alan cast about for a suitable reply. As an end in themselves, the Moghuls suddenly appeared a little tedious. Sir Charles was laughing.

'I thought not,' he said; 'but I had to be sure. Now listen to me. You're lost in Delhi. You know nobody really except me, whom you should regard strictly as a means to an end. I know rather too many people. You've had a bad time. I haven't. You're a deserving case. We won't go into details of my case. There must be something I can do for you?'

Those urbane, interrogative pauses! How well they would suit the fictional grandee, with sinister motives, that Sir Charles was not. He had nothing to gain, unless it were purely selfish pleasure to procure a little stage-managed happiness for someone else. (Perhaps it was.) An attractive girl rustled past them, on her way to another table, drawing Alan's eye.

'I don't advise her,' Sir Charles said quietly: 'look again!' Alan looked. Diana was only two tables away and, if he had seen her before, he had forgotten. I mean, he remembered only from that moment. And now, should I seem at a loss, you must remind yourself that I have something very exacting to describe. Diana's a very beautiful girl, and Alan was fascinated. He was that kind; if a girl had the looks to touch his imagination, he would forgive her anything. I grew to know the expression his face wore as he looked at her. I should have looked the same, with the same response, had I been Alan.

'Who's that?' he asked.

'That? That's old Leslie Garnett's daughter; he's in the running for B.G.S.—but that's irrelevant. I said I knew rather too many people. She appeals to you? But of course she does. Well, we'll see what we can do. Fortunately she only came down from Naini Tal on Sunday. One moment.'

Sir Charles is at his best on these occasions. There's



romance, the Trianons and Mayerlings of a deceptively gilded history, owe less of their fame to the happiness they afforded than to a kind of erotic melancholy? How this little jewel of a summer palace or that Watteau-esque garden, fountained and statued and groved, where the skill and delicacy of all Europe was bent to the one end of pleasure, derive their final poignancy from pain and frustration and grief? Would Malmaison have seemed quite the same to posterity had it not been for the faded, supplanted Josephine picking her Parma violets? You see what I mean? Very well, then; think of the opposite. Think of such places with their end fulfilled, as though, for once, the tapestry figures that frequented them had risen to their impossibly lyrical setting. And translate the setting to that of Delhi, with the amenities of the new and the gracefully crumbling fastnesses of the old. Any man who had Diana for the asking—or rather, for what he gave—would presumably be happy, but imagine, if you can, how these things might release and develop his happiness. For me there was no need to imagine; I saw. Indeed, although at one time my idea was to avoid two such obvious lovers, it was almost as though they haunted me, so often did I come upon them. One day, returning to the Old Fort, I left my bicycle by the fine mosque there, the Qila-i-Kuna. Outside I saw, close together, two pairs of shoes, army chaplis and a girl's white sandals. Inside, hand in hand, stood Alan and Diana. I saw their eyes following the Koranic text that ran up and over the white arch of the mihrab, and her smile when he pointed out the carved brambles and roses that threaded in, as though from nowhere, among the stiff marble characters. I slipped away, but cycling along the path that leads to the north-west gate I looked back. The golden head and the white dress betrayed her, framed in a little red Hindu balcony with a frescoed ceiling, and he beside her. There was barely room for them both. 'We'll see you for a drink at the Cecil,' they shouted. I went there and waited till lunch-time, but they never came. The following Sunday,

intending to bathe and laze alone by the Gymkhana Club swimming-pool, what should I see again but those golden curls, falling on golden-brown shoulders? There they were, tanning themselves on the lawn with their heads together. They'd seen me first and insisted on my having the promised drink with them; but I've never felt more superfluous, and lunched elsewhere. Also, of course, there were the normal social occasions. Sir Charles often figured in them, sometimes as host. Once I asked him what he made of the couple. He must have thought I was quizzing him about their engagement. 'Don't be so damned literal-minded,' was all he said.

There was nothing blatant in their behaviour, but if happiness of the intensity that those two shared really does, in some obscure way, affront the laws that govern society, then their guilt stood proved. I believe some such idea crossed Alan's mind from time to time. At various dances where we met I never saw him dance with any other girl, and never myself danced with Diana and very seldom saw her dance with anyone but him. Once, when some friend of her father's claimed her, I took him to the bar to find out how things were going. I told him he was lucky. 'Like hell I am,' he said, 'I'd never believed it possible,' and shied off the subject. But although he kept looking over his shoulder, he stayed remarkably long at that bar, and spent a great deal of money. He knew I was on loan to A.G. Branch at the time, and I remember he kept asking me about various people in his old division and speculating rather shamefacedly about casualties and reinforcements till I curbed him for reasons of security. I suppose I should have seen that he was trying, after those stolen weeks, to get his bearings. Anyway, he failed. I could see he forgot it all, back with Diana.

Did I say that couple haunted me? I think that before long I myself was engaged in that very species of day-dreaming that I'd already imputed to Alan. Possibly I'd done it all the time. But with this difference—I knew what I was missing. Climb with

me to the terraces of the splendid tomb that his wife raised to Humayun, and see the last sunset leave the blue tiles of the satellite dome below you, while the swelling white marble behind you gathers the cool gleam of night—and ignore, if you can, the neighbouring kiosk with its oblivious lovers. Take a novel and sandwiches to the Haus Khas and be alone, until, in the unechoing quiet of those fine processional cloisters, you see a golden head bent back and golden-brown arms twining and love made. Have you heard of that little pavilion in the Red Fort, the Diwan-i-Khas? The Stream of Heaven ran underfoot to cool it, and overhead, between the grailed, golden-flowered arches of oyster-coloured marble, the Persian legend declared, 'If there be a paradise on the face of the earth, it is this.' Take your letters and read them in the cool there, and see whether the golden haze begotten by the sunlight on those mouldings can fail in its facile enchantment, and find yourself waiting, but no longer alone, while those two, like sleep-walkers, saunter among the arches, and sunlight and tinted marble find their answer in her hair. Do this, and you'll know what I've done. Can you conceive of that couple's happiness? You can? Then think how it was to watch it, because—I admit it now—I did watch. No direct experience of my own has ever had quite that effect on me; not that even now I can say with certainty just what effect it was. Anyway, they were happy.

One morning after the repercussions of a policy conference had convulsed our office (I was told quite a *mêlée* had developed over the scale of honours and awards to base hospital orderlies), I dropped into the Imperial for a sorely-needed drink. On the terrace I met Diana waiting for Alan, who was late.

'Poor sweet,' she said, 'I expect he's working late. A desk job must be hell for some men from the forward areas. Probably he missed his usual lift in a staff car and had to take a tonga.'

'May be,' I said. I happened to know that Alan had gone round to the bank to cash the last cheque Sir

Charles had given him. He avoided charging bills to Sir Charles in front of Diana, not unnaturally. Somehow I felt nettled. Deliberately, I asked: 'Why don't you take his car and meet him at G.H.Q.?'

'My dear, that wouldn't suit him at all. It would look far too domestic. He likes to come and meet me, and I do love being met. Besides, there's the petrol; he saves it for our free time. We do have such lovely drives.'

I knew. Up on the Ridge, out on the Muttra Road, sometimes almost to Agra, quartering those plains by moonlight!

'Poor Betty,' she said, glancing at a girl in a khaki bush shirt; 'how she can abide that uniform, I can't imagine. Thank goodness I work in the U.S.O.W.I., where nobody bothers.' Simultaneously, both of us compared Betty's W.A.A.C. (I) turnout with her own perfectly fitting summer dress, not to mention the bracelets.

'Her boy friend's broke too, poor soul,' she added. 'They dance once a week, and then it's a tonga ride both ways. She must be smitten. I do think he might show some enterprise and borrow a jeep occasionally, don't you? Wouldn't you for—whoever it is?'

I didn't tell her that Betty's boy friend was so broke that he'd got quietly drunk on it the night before and asked to be posted forward that very morning. And Diana was so secure, and so desirable. At that moment she looked the complete spoilt beauty: I have a weakness for these.

'Have another drink and don't talk like a bitch,' I said.

'Sorry, I didn't mean to be beastly,' she responded softly, an innocent assurance in her eyes. 'It's just India, or Delhi perhaps. No, not just that. Thank you, I'd love one. I mean, I must be spoilt, not like poor Betty, because Alan looks after me so perfectly. I always seem to be saying yes and loving it.'

'Yes,' I said. (I nearly said 'what?' but refrained.) 'It must be heaven.' I knew Alan's bearer was combing

flower-stalls for the orchids Diana's maid was even then awaiting for her mistress. I knew, though Alan did not, that his old division, already shop-soiled in the Arakan, was even then emplaning for Assam, while the Japs were gathering on the hills above Kohima. And I knew that Alan would do anything rather than dilute his pipedream with the faintest breath of reality, and moved off the moment he arrived. That evening, the orchids were popular.

By this time most people thought Alan was behaving like a fool. As though to confirm the impression, the fly-blown weekly had twice published his photograph, along with those of Sir Charles and Diana. His few acquaintances saw too little of him, and coveted his girl and his car. Already, among those dark, partnerless groups, morosely ginning up and casting glances, who are a permanent and forbidding feature of social life in India, there was serious excuse for writing him off as a small-time *chevalier de boudoir*. On one occasion some fellow said as much and there were nearly fisticuffs in the cloakroom. At first glance, it was simple enough. Environment pulls very strongly in India, strongly enough to absorb the whole of British society into the Sargasso Sea of caste. It's a stronger and subtler form of whatever it is elsewhere that makes some bishops in a special sense episcopal and some sailors operatically nautical and some nominal cavalry officers look as though they could really ride. In Alan's case, thanks to the address of Sir Charles and his own passion for Diana, it had drawn him back to the social tradition, isolated and menaced but dying hard, of the peacetime Indian Army, and a part of him, in bond to an older India that neglected its sepoyes and declared its love in white marble, had gone further still. There was nothing odd in that. Successfully in love, and cast by Sir Charles for an attractive minor role in the Delhi spectacle, why not give himself up to it? For a time I thought he did, wholeheartedly, as I in his place would have done.

And then one night I knew better, as I should have

known before. I found him at the bar of his mess hostel, alone and rather drunk.

'No Diana this evening?' I asked.

'Not after a session like this. That would crown everything.'

'Been on a party already?'

'Good God, no. Look at the time. Not going on one either. But if you want to catch me up, you'll have to work fast.'

'Then what is this? Have you and Diana——?'

His face lost its look of strain and brightened, but only for a moment. 'I don't know,' he said slowly; 'I suppose I just can't take it.'

'Take what?' And then by degrees I drew it out of him. It was none too coherent, but roughly it amounted to this:—

He had first seen Diana at a time when his own loneliness and the rich glaze of the Moghul tissue in which he had shrouded it had awakened his emotions but yielded nothing to assure them relief. She had captivated him from the moment he saw her, and from that moment he had wanted her as he had never wanted anything in his life. On his own, he thought, he would never have achieved her, probably never met her at all. (I think he was right; in Delhi, subject to American intervention, the unconnected stranger cut little ice.) Sir Charles, of course, had made all the difference, but Alan, in accepting his overtures, had not quite known what he was doing. What he had done, at least in part, was to resign his own personality. Very superficial, you may say, but it was quite enough to deceive a girl who had never known him before. There was that car, for instance, snapped up off an affluent wing-commander going home. Alan, by himself, could never have dreamt of buying it, yet to Diana he figured as someone who inevitably owned a car and plenty of petrol. It was the same with the presents he gave her; the bracelets and earrings she would wear to please him, came from one who gave as unreflectingly as she accepted. She wasn't mercenary; any trash from him

would probably have pleased her, though out of taste I think she'd have hidden it; but how could she be expected to know that the cost was wildly disproportionate to his private resources? The parties, too, those rosy, reckless evenings that thanks to Sir Charles' name and a well-tipped staff, had ended heaven knows when, and those more intimate but scarcely cheaper evenings that had expanded to nights and days, sometimes week-ends, when he'd made her free of all Delhi had to offer? Why should she worry? He seemed rich, which was fortunate, but not unheard-of. He was certainly lavish, but she was used to that; and besides they loved each other. He was very much at home in Delhi; he knew places and people and how to pilot her around, and generally belonged in the milieu which had been her India since leaving school. She'd been quite surprised to hear he was not a regular. The one thing that distinguished him from others who had loved her, apart from the Moghul daydreams, was that she loved him in return. The truth was that Delhi had seduced him, who was new to it, and blinded her, whom it had formed. And he knew it, and knew that she didn't, and the knowledge was a strain. For some time, he said, it had grown on him, so tonight he'd stayed home to think about it, with what result I saw. It took a good deal of John Collins to get this clear, but I could see he meant it.

'Can't you tell her?' I said. 'Surely you and she can tell each other anything by now?'

'I know her, I think, but does she know me? If I told her now, what could she possibly make of it? Wouldn't I look like a fraud, or someone backing down on her, or both? I can't risk losing her.'

'You mean, you won't risk talking sense to her,' I said. I'd meant to rally him, but as I spoke I began to see other possibilities. Suddenly I saw myself, and realized that I was almost gloating.

'I can't,' said Alan.

Ridiculously, it was true. I knew then that although

Diana had sense and delicacy to accept Alan as I knew him, she would never now have the chance. His fear would prevent her, his desperate fear of destroying his own illusion, which had brought him love, in case, when it was gone, she should have none for its creator. With the sweets of all the Delhis to sustain him, he would play his exotic charade until the end.

'It's up to you,' I said. Alan fingered his drink and didn't answer, so I added: 'If you did lose her, what would you do?'

'God knows.' He sat staring at the Hindu calendar behind the bar. 'I can't lose her, but I can't go on like this either.'

I suppose I should have given him Worcester Sauce, or put him to bed, or something, but I didn't. I left him.

But go on he did. During the week that followed, no single man in Delhi, and few married, can have had such an enviable time. The couple danced, rode, rambled, picnicked, and presumably made love as gaily as ever. One evening, while I listened, they discussed a Kashmir houseboat holiday that they planned to spend together. But during that week I had some news. A signal reached my office by mistake: it was marked SECRET—IMMEDIATE and dealt with the reinforcement situation in the Middle East. It was brusque in tone, betraying in every sentence the hammer-fisted illiteracy of a well-known figure in that theatre, and highly controversial in content. Clearly it was meant for Sir Charles, and since his office was not far down the corridor and I wanted to see his reaction, I took it to him myself.

'My God,' he said, after reading it, 'if only the bloody man would leave off being a tower of strength occasionally,' and went straight in to see the B.G.S. At lunch, from one of his G.IIs I heard he'd secured an airberth for Cairo on a high priority. He afterwards ascribed his long and uncomfortable tour to the fact that he'd lent the B.G.S. a remarkably bad book on



contract bridge. I didn't see him again for nearly two months.

I don't know when Alan found out, nor when he began to worry over paying his debts, nor when he sold his car, nor when, if ever, Diana sold his presents, nor when I first saw her without him, nor when I first danced with her. It may be hypocrisy, but I'm glad I never knew how and when those two really hit the rocks. Certainly I shall never ask Daina. But I do remember one Sunday afternoon at Maiden's when I sat on the verandah, reading. It was blazing hot outside and my jug of ice was melting, and my forehead tickled from the feet of sweat-wading flies. A tonga stood by the gate, the old horse twitching, and a little boy in a dhoti was chasing pi-dogs with a stick. Someone suddenly walked out behind me and mounted the tonga and drove off, and only as it vanished did I realize it was Alan. I looked round and saw Diana, and she was crying. Then she ran indoors. He must have made a pretty crude end of it, and for that I find it hard to forgive him.

Two days later he came to see me in my office. Curiously, his face wore the look I remembered from our first meeting, which is not as common in Delhi as further east.

'I want a job forward,' he said. I didn't ask why, but mentioned a sub-area H.Q. near the Bengal-Assam border where I thought we might fit him in as G.III.

'The hell with G.IIIs!' he said, 'I want infantry. Couldn't I go back to the old division? You said they were always screaming for platoon commanders.'

It was perfectly true, they always were. But it meant that he came down to lieutenant.

'Platoon commander? Don't be ridiculous, man, you're graded B.3.'

'I'm not. I've been regraded. Here.'

Had he not produced that certificate I wouldn't have believed him. There are always ways and means of procuring these things. I didn't know what to do. His division was committed, and was already suffering heavy casualties. I temporized.

'That'll mean the reinforcement pool,' I said; 'it's about all I can do for you. Are you sure you want it?'

'If it does mean the pool, I'll never forgive you as long as I live.'

I looked at him. I'd never heard him speak with such intensity, but his face showed nothing. It only looked as it did when he came back from the Arakan, as though his Delhi-interlude had never happened. The fan was rattling. Outside, beyond the War Memorial, I could see the kiosks over the gate of the Purana Qila.

'I can't promise,' I said; 'but I'll see about it. It all depends on the casualty returns. Take it easy, old boy.'

At that moment my W.A.C.(I) came in with some files I'd asked for, an exceedingly pretty Anglo-Indian girl with a voice like a very young donkey and twin crushes on the A.A.C. and an American sergeant. She and Alan looked meaninglessly at each other for a moment. When I'd finished with her, he'd gone. He left Delhi five days later, and in the next three weeks Diana phoned me fourteen times. The fourteenth was almost endurable.

Kohima was a ruin when I reached it. They'd shelled out the last Jap bunker less than a week before and one or two of the more distant features were still Jap-occupied. Mine was only a liaison visit, needless to say, but for some reason I felt that the very smell of the forward areas would do me good. At Alan's division H.Q. I mentioned that my journey had prevented my seeing the returns for four days, and asked to look at them. It took the usual time to find them, and I hadn't finished reading them when Alan's brigade-major dropped in. I knew him at Cambridge. Casually, I asked after Alan.

'Don't know the chap,' he said, 'but two companies of his battalion were on this morning's party, supporting the Punjabis. They should have withdrawn by now; the Punjabis have been digging in since eight o'clock. I'll ring brigade if you'd care to check up on

him.' My first reaction was that Cambridge produced unusually civil brigade-majors.

It was some time before he got through. I went on reading, but soon heard him ask for some captain or other, and then swear loudly on discovering he was through to a perfectly irrelevant field battery not far away. Before long I began to think about Diana. I had a sudden urge to write to her, and scribbled I forget what on a loose sheet of typing paper. A staff-sergeant brought me some tea and an envelope. The wind kept flapping the tarpaulin that covered the broken roof.

I was looking for the censor-stamp when I heard the B.M. speaking down the phone. He asked about Alan and then listened for nearly a minute. 'They're looking him up,' he said over his shoulder.

I heard him speak in disjointed snatches. 'Saunders? No, Sanderson, S-A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N. That's right, Sanderson. When? What feature? Oh, the Ham-Bone feature. Yes, I know about that business. I see. Tell them to expect me back after tomorrow's conference, not later than three. O.K. Cheerio!' He hung up and looked round at me.

'I'm sorry,' he said; 'he's had it.'

There was an awkward pause. Forward and rear H.Q.s are both apt to be brief about casualties, but for widely different reasons.

He looked at me again. 'Did you know him well?' he said suddenly.

'Fairly well. Why?'

'Just this. Sanderson's crowd were doing a spot of mopping up two days ago. That feature over there—looks like a ham-bone on the map.' He pointed out of the window. I'm still not sure which one he meant, but didn't interrupt him. 'They didn't expect to find more than the odd sniper, but there were a couple of machine-gun posts the patrol hadn't spotted, and it turned out pretty sticky. Apparently his platoon got pinned down by cross-fire for quite a time. It's on the steep side, and not much cover. Anyway, Sanderson thought he could snake up to the nearer post and grenade it. He

arranged with the sergeant for covering fire, and then gave him a lot of orders that amounted to handing over the platoon.' He paused again.

'Very natural,' I remarked. 'He'd have been to blame if he hadn't.'

'Yes, but it was the way he gave them, the sergeant said. They sounded as though he never expected to get back, or even hoped to. And he wouldn't take anyone with him, not even his batman, who asked to go. The sergeant thought he'd been queer from the start—tried to stop him, said he hadn't a chance. He hadn't either, I've seen the ground. Anyway, that was the last of him.'

'Did he get that post?' I asked, for no particular reason.

'Good God, no. He stopped a burst before he'd gone thirty yards. The sergeant reckons it was suicide, but that's off the record, of course.'

I caught a jeep back to Corps that afternoon, but I never posted my letter.

That was two months ago. Diana's rather statuesque at parties but she drinks rather more in private, and I find there are spots round Delhi that she and Alan had never visited. She's as beautiful as ever. I've weaned her away from an American major and we go out a good deal these days. If we can get out to Fatehpur Sikhi one weekend, I've promised to show her the palace of the Rajput princess, the one with the little red pavilions and green-tiled roofs. As for Kashmir, I'm taking a houseboat—she'd adore the imperial gardens. I doubt whether Sir Charles much approves me lately, so perhaps I'd better start a rumour that Diana and I are engaged. Put it all down to Delhi. Goodbye.

IN the dim twilight  
They came  
And whispered into our ears :  
Night is at an end : get up, you captive heroes ;  
The world is smitten with the thousand rays of the sun.  
Still the intoxication of opium persisted,  
It had dimmed our sight  
And had made our young blood slow :  
We heard the call  
But fell to sleep again as before.  
The call of the sea heard in a dream was far away.

Still a thousand flaming brands of consciousness  
Roam about in darkness :  
As if a thousand torches  
Are at once set aflame in all directions.  
They who have given us opium to take  
Become mortally frightened :  
This unthinkable flood of fire  
May spoil the artificial sleep  
Produced through their century-long conscious efforts.  
So they want to keep this flame of consciousness down.

The torch-bearers go down fighting :  
They disappear  
Like the cloud-ridden moon in the night sky.  
But still the vitiated minds blinded by self-interest  
Cannot feel assured.

They disappear  
But they leave an unforgettable memory behind  
In millions of human hearts :  
Our blood though sluggish with intoxication  
Responds eagerly again to the dream of the world  
to come.

*Translated from the Bengali by THE AUTHOR.*

## *Una Cheverton*

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### *FOUR POEMS*

#### *POLONNARUWA*

POLONNARUWA,  
the place is real.

Under veilings of rain  
in the soft monsoon  
the lake laps warm, an opal breast,  
the sky its breathing twin.

Dreams, beginnings glisten,  
accrete and stagnate  
bleary as crocodile,  
frightful as tarantula,  
velvet as flower of the jak-fruit

and with an outflung lace  
of ooze and looming sun  
all that was tossed in man the impractical dice  
is piled on trays

or tided thick from vats  
or kindled in sky-sheaves  
or yet has not been set  
mudwise to grind below the lake.

In such a storing-house of seed  
no elegies are spent  
for saturation point of man.

Here there is too much weaving,  
too much breath.

This is no altar to desertion  
waxy with relic, this  
is texture bright with love,  
more live than loves.

Here then burns my faith. Here are the fire  
and fattening water.  
Here the loosening air,  
close earth to pin  
loops of the womb-shy life.

## CROCODILE HOUR

### I

I CANNOT but write at crocodile hour,  
head my letter, *crocodile-hour*;

jungle will not split  
a wit of mine;

this pulse was always lapped in forest,  
rounding a secret band; this audience  
(uneasy with the radio)  
now claps to crocodile  
brother to brother, ears  
exact and strong as twins.

O singing home of mine and twittering home  
full as a meal, O spread  
and dripping home, O loves along the marsh,

how shall I round a letter to the men  
who do not see you? So

fast they hold the flutes  
that enter feudal scores  
of man-with-flute and man-directing-flute and man  
inking the flute-notes in a parlour  
shut from weathers.

Mine are snake-lulling  
flutes of water.

Where the pelican  
(pale and buoyant tub) signals the yellow  
bilge-loving butterflies back into a crowd  
I hunt my autographs.

My foot presses the prints  
of beggar-dog along by lake-rocks;  
all my trend is traced by dragonflies  
and chary cheeta's eyes  
flaring from cubs.

Between submergence of the crocodile and next  
shadowed-purpose rising  
I've gathered more along these muds  
than from a ten-year clock-round.

## II

But what a sweep is his  
on entering like a world-wide tenor,  
gnarled and contemptuous!

He has arrived at greatness. Looks don't count,  
the old worm-eaten bole, the stagnant brow,  
his fungus-knotted back and eyes  
like specks of red rust in a floating gherkin.



Do not the chorus cringe? Canoeing storks  
go sifting up like petals? Do not all  
the little shore-locked snakes like shuddering rushes  
twirl as from evil stench, do not cicadas  
yield him hush of the tomb and then loose hell  
with jungle-dogs in satisfactory squall  
of vocal hate?

### III

I've seen from several backstage points  
the table-tricks  
and magic box of man.

I don't condemn the wizardry  
but want to know the object; what I love  
of crocodile is such unswerving force  
that fame's of no account,  
a whirl of gnats.

Looking to right nor left he sets  
the sundown lake a-churn and yet  
sole thought is tribute to his lover, sweeping  
openly to her lair.

### IV

Now he sinks  
(a slowly-logging rotting tree)  
to fastnesses of love. Reeds  
untie their fingers and begin  
the slumber-song of certain  
chosen notes.

Yet in the half-light  
bright as a gilded gentian, a quick  
and thrifty kingfisher  
darts to his dark-swirled stump for one  
last lucky catch.

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*AFTER THIS*

AFTER war like this,  
Rev. Fry can fold his nose  
within the Times (page 2)  
sniffing in syncopation over India's  
Advance To Freedom;  
brigadiers from Burma  
now do swish moustaches with Another  
meatless day dim show.

After war like this  
along Chowringhee,  
foot by step as dust grows darker,  
pavement-padding soldiers  
urge no pace nor heat . . . .  
(and why the freshly-dhobied jungle-green?)  
who are females,  
chi-chi or new or shy or regular?  
Heck . . . . men  
forget the moves of being Yorks or Lances  
or perky chaps from Chelsea.

Over-dragged and plugging a staling act  
they sicken on their manhood.

After war  
(it dreams me still  
that now is past and sealed)  
the busty Ensa singer from Penarth  
slops to her dormitory at four,  
aims for the toilet;  
with her boils a pocket of gin and  
Pink Geranium Hair-Fix;  
rift of bone-lifting sweepers  
down in the alley on their fragile shins .  
too constrained a sound is  
for her beleaguered nostrils.

Yes after this  
the church-illuminated christians of their charity  
still live the worn cliché of cutting dead  
a dancer with a man  
in her Great Eastern bedroom.

Town-taught bearers  
know a Memsahib still  
as one who grips no bundles.

Well, after this  
I'll have no further truck with any  
sweet gentility.

Give me the straight-up savage and the  
whisper-ridden starveling.

Show me murderers, rats, yes! let me meet  
with bent neurotics in their webby corners.

Introduce me, will you  
to the scum.

And take your prim, unbleeding, gangrenous world  
for cauterizing  
clear to the bone.

### *FLESH-FEATHERED MAN*

Soon, flesh-feathered man  
you'll die;  
a week, a dozen years or so and you'll  
be through.

Never having thinned your lust in blue  
ballooning contour of the sea  
or seen the sure  
ghost-walking of the moon's corona, breathed

---

your blood into raw spirit for the love  
of tree-trunks truly-curved,  
of buds or fins or trills or tones or words  
fine-served;

and never having dreamed  
the shaping of your pearl, the mist  
across the field that swells your food, the heart  
that under-buttresses your turned-on tune, the due  
to earth for her designing of this ape,  
this churl and amorist and leech-of-hell,  
device of darkest art, this fleshful you.

You will depart  
from all fast-emptying bars  
whose walls absorb your tale along with veils  
of coughed-up smoke from last year's lungs.

Your ego soaked  
heavy with dull heroic tears  
will plunge in horrid blindness on a night  
of no ideas.

Ah yes, you'll die.

High time, say I.

Kim Christen

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## WHY IS A WORLD WHEN IT SPINS

I HAVE read of these things—of God, and Beginning and End, and Why is a World when it Spins; and I have often thought on them, lying belly down on some high place and chewing on a grass stalk, with the summer sun hot along my knobbled spine. But at the dry end of the stalk I have ever turned about and stared into the eye of the sun and seen such speculation for what it is.

Our concern with God is measure of our godlessness. As of our bloodlessness. No healthy soul, with any red of love and of life in him, with five and more untold senses given with which to meet the wind on the heath, should have even so many minutes to waste on God.

So long as we think about God, have ideas about God, so long are we held from God; that is, from awareness of our own deep, sure divinity. Ideas and awareness are mutually exclusive. A black clothed priest pranting of God from a pulpit on a sunny Sunday, is as far removed from God as his own great toe from his shiny pate.

But a tabby cat now, stretching its claws in the sun; or a robin on a laundry line, singing out the joy that is too great for so small a breast to contain; or a donkey such as I once saw quiet cropping on the grass beside an Irish lake, that of a sudden and of no seeming reason, lifted high his head and screamed and screamed, all bowel and belly having part in it—these in their own manner and according to their own kind, are supremely aware of God, are godly themselves.

Caring *what* God is, we cannot know *that* he is.

First we must cease to care.

It matters not at all that I should know about God. It matters only that God should know about me. And he does, for the sun shows it, and my brown skin bears his assurance.

That should be enough for us, and we ought not need to stoop to the folly of speculation, but stand up only and merrily, redly sing. Life is! Love life! Live life! All 'God's chillun', we should have no need, no want to wonder the why of things.

As I have wondered the why of things.

At ten: lying along the limb of a hoary, tremendous oak in a wide parkland; comes the caw of a rook from a topmost branch, and I am suddenly filled with bewilderment, with wonder at my circumstance. Something that was 'I' lying there in the still afternoon, the bare patches of grass under, the fallen host of acorns, the long quiet and the caw of a rook—an ordinary afternoon suddenly become so extraordinary, so unbelievable, so bewitched! But why these things should in one moment be acceptable to me, and in the next bring bewilderment, at once pleasure and pain, I have now no better way to tell than at the happen of it.

Again, at fifteen: a swimming hole and I deep under in the clear stream, curving alone in fishy ecstasy; of a sudden, the glimpse of my white foot following, and joy is gone to an acute, terrifying awareness—the green deep, the river reeds, and this 'I'! I pull myself onto the bank and sit there wrinkle-browed, asking What? and Why? And though later I shake my head of these heavy things and dive again, it is not the same. Somehow, I am bruised.

There have been other times even so. Many times even so until at twenty now, leaning to a sentinel pine on the high edge of the world in the Himalayas; the sun is gone down behind the snowed eternal heights, its cloak of many colours drawn after, the cicadas are silent, and upon me is an aloneness as never before. Then something in the strangeness of it all compels me to say out my name, quiet at first, but now more loud, then again more loud and again and again louder and

louder, until it is a wild shout from me, my name, my name over the far jungled valley.

And each time after there is only a huge quiet, no echo given, nothing. Nothing at all. And so . . . it seems then that I can no longer say who is called, nor yet who calls, and . . . there is no more fear; strangely, somehow that great loneliness is gone, for see—there is no more anyone to be lonely!

There is no one. No one at all. Not this 'I'. Only a name in the still, high night, unechoed. And in a splendid calm then I understand that there is nothing to be answered; that the whole secret of things is that there is no secret.

Now to my frown-browed, solemn, earnest Why is fronted this disarming reply, a smile and a shrugging of the shoulders, and a spreading of the hands. 'Well, why not?'

So long wondering what was Life's purpose, I had not until now thought to wonder that there was purpose at all. My ponderous speculations, my philosophical pretensions—all were founded on a quite arbitrary presumption of purpose.

This starred night in the mountains, the bottom fell out of my bucketed thoughts.

Purpose is incompleteness, and Life has no need, has need of nothing. Life is whole and is at all times, in all ways, absolute, topless, unfathomable, phoenix, fountainous. Life is.

Things *are*. Simply they are—the snow crown of Kanchenjunga, the darkling pines, cicada song, the white tip-tail of a startled rock rabbit. And we, we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts given to beat in gladness of all things revealed and made known.

How many magic moments have been lost to this crazed, wonder why! To have the meadow grass to romp upon as children, to lie upon as lovers, and the harvest moon under which to sigh, and yet to ask: Why? Why? What foolishness!

Is the sun any less God for knowing it is a cart-

wheel of gas aflame? For what could gas aflame be but the bright grin of God? And knowing what the sun is brings the body no deeper brown. Shall this country couple, in an apple loft imparadised, deny the divine dear madness that the slanting moonlight wakens in them, simply because they are well aware that this magic disk is in fact made only of green cheese?

Yet, it would seem that the while we are as we are, we will ever ask of things to explain themselves. And, it will be done needingly so that the folly of asking might in the end be understood. We will ask as I have asked. As I would no longer ask, except smilingly sometimes, not needing to know, but on a heat hazy day wondering for the fun of it only.

There is no explanation of life outside the living of it. Life, wholly lived, explains itself. See the bright eyes of an urchin boy; it is all clearly explained, and when he digs his grimy hands into his pockets, throws back his head, and saunters the street with a gay whistle on his lips, the whole secret is out, all life is told. And this pony colt rolls on his back in the daisied paddock and points his spindle shanks to the sky—he does, because he knows; through and through he *knows*, and that is his way of telling.

There was a Buddhist who came before a gathering of monks to deliver them a sermon. Just as he would have started to speak, a bird flew overhead and gave out a wild cry. Without another word, the Buddhist left the gathering.

And think of all the things a tree tells!

It must be that there is green sap wanting in me that I should have so needed to speculate my beginning. So deeply I do feel the futility of words; as deeply am I yet compelled towards them. And it is now with a wild logic that I gather together these many words all to tell that words are worthless, and books are but baubles, idle things for idle days.

But if idle things are in one, they ought to be outed. Telling the Beginning and End of things, I



shall then perhaps have done, and be able to sing again after, uncaringly. So for a season then shall my harp hang upon the willows, and Nietzsche shall have the answer of these my godless moments to his : '*Warum? Wofur? Wohin? Wo? Wie?*'

In the beginning . . . .

A great while ago the world began,  
With a hey, ho, the wind and the rain.

Wisely, the clown was content with that. But there are other myths too. Choose which one most pleases. Myself, I prefer the Indian Creation : Brahma at play, without fore-design or thought, as a summer sand boy, created the wide universe.

Saying : 'I'll make me something.' Then in glad surprise : 'What's this? Ah!—a world!'

To me it is more likely and, for sure, more likeable than the precisional gloom of Genesis. I like it better, and so may believe it better than an equally unaccountable Eden, and Old Adam of the Missing Rib, and Eve with her 'Granny Smith', and the Serpent.

In the night of Brahma, Siva dances and awakens to life; and Siva dances on and in time destroys by his dancing. This more nearly corresponds with what I have myself seen in the four seasons of an English wood.

But of the *why* of the world, the Indian myth says not even Brahma knows. Simply, the Dance is.

And I like that confession. I like it better than God with his all-knowingness, with his angel clerks, his white-collar cherubim, and his Domesday Book.

Perhaps because I am one of the goats.

In the beginning, then, was Dance. And the Dance was with God. And the Dance was God. And every manifestation, then as now and as will be—the earth itself, of the risen sun, or stars or winter wind, or Francis of Assisi or Ghengis Khan, Delilah or Yoshidara, the newsboy, the milkmaid, the dappled

cow, black snake or mustard butterfly, blue-bells or desert cactus, or moss or coral polyp, or anything else—each is one movement in the Dance. Each is separate and distinct in itself, live and wholly justified; yet each and all are in the Dance.

Without manifestation there would be no movement, no Dance. Without the forms of life, Life would not be. God would not be. To be is to dance; and if God stopped dancing, he would cease to be. God is not, until he is made manifest. God is not, until he is somewhere danced.

And first was a fire dance.

I do not know, but this earth, they say, was torn from the side of the sun. I do not know, but I can very well believe it so, while this flame is on my back. And it will seem certain tonight when I slide this burn of my nakedness between the sheets.

This earth and these near planets are spoil of the sun. Even so was the moon wrested from the earth. Science tells it, and again it might well be true for I do feel it so. I am beloved of the sun, but of the moon am I more the lover. Here and in this glad moment now, I am opened up and reach to the sun to be taken, even as that girl I saw once in a Kentish hop field expected of the sunny faced lad who leant over her, and there was the slow yawn of her knees to receive him. Tonight I will again reach out, but this time differently, to take. The new moon already showing in this afternoon sky is the curve of my fifth rib, and the night's gesture will be from out of me that the silver arc might again be gathered in, and the moon no more be missing from my flank. But it is from the sun that I, together with the earth, am derived. It is to the sun that I return for strength. It is by the sun that I am gathered in.

This sphere then of fire.

Came a cooling off. The sphere slowed and showed upon its surface, ash and rock and clinker. There was air. There was water. There was earth. The meeting

of force with force gave start to form, mineral and vegetable. And somehow, somewhen, somewhere there was 'life'.

Protoplasm, they name it. Yet this was no sudden jelly grain; else we must concern ourselves with such profundities as, which came first, the chicken or the egg. Or the cockerel? Nobody knows, and only the craven care.

It is a gay dance, remember, not the working out of a blueprint.

This life that was in the sun, in space and star dust, in stream and clinker, now was realized as jelly, blind and unblinking.

In a history classroom, a boy of ten puzzled: 'Well, if that Jelly Thing was the very first form of living matter, it must have been God, musn't it?'

'Yes, Michael,' I replied, 'I suppose it must.' And I was silent with this clue as long after as the clamour of eager questions allowed. Nor did these questions leave me with the boys' bedtime. I walked the empty lawns with them. How had I not understood this before? This jelly bean was God, as best He then knew how!

And a freckle faced child had taught me it.

Shall it be said that such explanations rob us of wonder, of worship and a sense of gladness? It would be a damning criticism. Science is not life. Science is measurement, and life is not to be held beside the rule; nor truth and joy and beauty to be stretched along the arm of a draper's assistant, from nose to finger tip. Most times, the savage with his totem and his blind terror yet has more of life and live being than this myopic dome-head who hunchbacks a test-tube and squints a microscope. Yet it need not be. For sure, it should not be. The facts of life cannot pretend to explain away the dynamic of life, any more than anatomy can tell all the miracle of a man. And the surgeon-lecturer, though come from the dissecting

room, no less rejoices in the bright being of the girl student in the back row middle.

Wise to the way of the wind and the rain, we are no less humbled by a storm sky. It is the small-fry scientists that stop at science, who can so surely say there is no God. The tall ones have gone beyond belief, but, as well, they have gone beyond disbelief. The science that made fine sceptics of them, now has provided a new and knowledged faith. And they are bright-eyed again.

So it ought be. Science does not disprove, but only insists the glory of life. Science is not separate from song. How often I have come from the public library where I have been thumbing a book on stellar theory, and I have backed against a column, standing there in glad prayerful suspense, needing no imagined host of angels other than these flicker points of sky dust to empty me of all that was small and only of self.

Now, from the jelly bean to the man of Java is many a million year, but in nine months the living womb tells it all. From protozoa to fish, to amphibian, to reptile, to mammal, to monkey, to man—all is contained in the belly of a young girl that has loved and won. As within her, so perhaps it was with the world.

God that was this tapioca thing, got himself fins and a sweeping tail that he might be greater, more capably God. Poor fish, proud fish, it struggled from out of the slime and the sea and lay there breathing in the pain of a new element. And that was God again, gasping there on the sand and the mud flats. In the drip and dark of swamp and fern and conifer forests, coexistent, coeternal with the grey lento of decay was this silver andante of emergent life, this God, paining ever to new, more splendid form, new body and being. Now reptile for a while with terror in his aspect; now with milk in his breast and a growing awareness, as a squirrel with schemes beyond the day and the moment of mid-summer.

And then, through all the million years came this hairy emergence, ascendant of the ape, God in the guise

of a man, more or less; with tooth too stunted for combat, with limbs that were frail and unscaled, with a body strong yet vulnerable, haired but thin of hide, yet with some new quality that in large measure discounted the need of these others; something that was not merely an increased share of the old, but a new thing added unto him, a spark that never was seen, a gleam of greater consciousness.

Caliban now, without claws but with a brain born of a million, million years of scheme and struggle. This brain was a thing of blood, then as now and ever shall be; but, as well, it was a thing by which that blood might be channelled and perhaps conquered. All these others, fish and beast and fowl that had come before and had known reign in sea and in air and on land, far eclipsing this new one in strength and speed and stature, now fell to his wiles for want of his wits.

But this new faculty did not as yet estrange him. Still he was a part of things. That old unconscious identity with all around and about, now was replaced by a relationship only a little less vital. Still his was a presence among presences. Day and night, sun and moon, thunder and rain and trees, boulder and blossom and bird and beast—all these he knew directly by blood and immediate sense.

Even more immediate was his relationship to his clan, by blood and the one brain; for this new found consciousness was yet nothing separate, not his alone. He was not yet individual but, like the ant and the swarming bee, part of a part. His assertion was as a herd. It could be no other way. Alone, he could not be. He was nothing, and as powerless in meeting with his more apparent enemies as in meeting with the storm sky and the forest gods. Alone he could not step into the woods of a night. *Numen inest!* But as a herd he could step so, and bravely. As a herd he was the equal and more of his many enemies, and these blood gifts of the community were his own insurance against wrath.

This was the Gregarian Age, the era of group-consciousness.

Again, the many million years and now, far gone from the ape, man was not only alive but *knowing* himself so. Knowing himself chipping at flint, marking the walls of his dwelling, or warming his rump over the red fire; knowing himself bending in the woods to gather branches for *his* fire, crouching and creeping to kill and so to fill *his* belly, aching to spend *his* burn of body, to lay his scraggle-haired woman on the dry leaves in the cave corner. And sometimes too, lack-a-day lazy by the river edge, whittling at his axe shaft, wondering on himself, and perhaps on that other fellow into whose blank eyes he had that evening stared, seeing in them something else than a sleep that would have its end with the next sun-up.

Man then some day saying in himself, of himself: 'I am I! And these others are not I. Not this earth, nor any upon it; not this near woman nor yet this small one, wide-eyed, and bellied of milk, and belching. I am I and, albeit like and near, these others are not I.'

In the language of a later-day science—where *Id* was, now was *Ego*.

Man then awakened to loneliness and strange despair. Knowing a little of life, now he must know something of death. And he gathers possessions to himself, thinking so to enlarge and entrench himself, to have and to hold, and so a while to forget his loneliness in life, his dread in death. Man against man, matching wit with wit, and by such exercises of survival all the while becoming the more secured, determined, even defiant in his new-won assertion.

Lonely now, and making boast of loneliness. Not 'I am I' whispered with awe and a glance over the shoulder, but 'I am I' told with a shaken fist and froward chin.

But the many multitude in spite of, because of, this new-found knowledge yet saw it safety to stay together in such a way to save themselves from themselves, from losing themselves again, and learning the while all the

white deceits of self-consciousness of which we today are practised masters.

So the many multitude. But a crowd is without artistry. Herring gulls give out only clamour, and the chaffinch that he might out-sing his early spring song first must make the break from his winter companions and go on wing alone. Among men too there were those who grew apart by their artistry, who told tales or sang songs that were other than only communal, or carved from wood a drinking bowl that bore some signature and design of individuality, and these bravely took upon themselves credit for all the articulate and proven loveliness which before had been divinely accredited, given of the gods to a fortunate and chosen people. Sweet Sappho, though allowing that 'The muses inspired me', yet insisted 'I shall not be forgotten.' And a smaller singer than she yet made the greater claim: 'I have put my seal upon these verses. The fruit of my art. No one shall steal them or claim them as his. Everyone will say: "These are the verses of Theognis of Megara."'

There were others too who, for other than art's sake, dared deeper into their selves, refusing to sand their heads.

Such a one perhaps, so wrapt in wonder and query, did unknowingly wander from the tribe to wake of a sudden with the desert around about and the caravan continued on. Another perhaps went apart of proud intent, braving to know more acutely that loneliness from which his fellows had huddled, and walking on he sensed himself in his 'I am I' so far estranged from all about him, from beast and tree and the very earth he trod and, in a pained and puzzled way, from his own body even.

And there were others for other reasons who chose to Walk Alone In The Wild Wet Woods. And all these, if they did not at once turn back in terror, but stayed to settle with their fears, to square with desert space and the night-sky silence, they must return to the Careful People with other-worldliness in their eyes,

and some new being that the pack were quick to sense and to suspect, to fear, to hate, or to love and respect and revere.

For there were many sorts of victories for the loneliest ones.

Some there were who saw themselves strong to stand against this fear of the great silence of themselves; and such a victory made of them kings and rulers among the less tall of stature. Some there were who came to subtle terms with the shades; and they were the priests, even as the kings, ruling men's lives by their fear of death. Some there were who won to a love of life and silent night, the saints, for the most part uncatalogued; good they were, and loving and godly. And a few, a very few there were who, given victory, surrendered it to have life overcome them, ceasing to be as selves, were wholly given up to life, gone beyond goodness, beyond love, beyond God. These, the few, the free ones, were and are, and shall be.

These are the only individuals. Of the rest, the multitude today, it may be said that the Gregarian Age is gone by. The song is now single enough. Today is the Age of the 'I'. The 'I' Rampant. But the splendour of the song is lost. Once 'I am I' was a glad full-chested cry. Today it is but weedy, without joy or conviction. The wisest among us is but he who most loudly whistles in the dark; he is brave seeming, but not less lonely.

So it is with us today. Shall it ever be so? We have traced the tale to ourselves. Little man, what now?

A physiological history might well provide evidence to suggest that in body we are at an end. Brained man has no need to alter to his outward circumstance. Instead he will himself alter the circumstance, or make or find the means to meet it external to himself, will take on or put off or employ. (Indeed, it must now be his care to save himself in body. Having a brain, his consciousness, he will count his body, his unconscious-



ness, nothing, and so be lost again to that health which is wholeness.)

Because of a brain, proud man has found answer and entrance to all things. To all things, that is, but the one thing that can matter to him—his happiness; the joy in life that a simple, unknowing chipmunk shows.

There is a brightness in the eyes of a mule or a blind mole that is seldom seen among us, unless it be in our cradles or our asylums. At our best and bravest we seem able to sing only in spite of life, not because of it. Ah Man! How like an angel indeed! Ah me! For the tiny dusty span of a sparrow's wings allows it a joy we seldom even dream.

And want of a like gaiety must make all else that is gained seem futile, foolish. Progress leads nowhere if not to joy. We can put sound in a box and span sea and sky as we will, yet we are less bright and awake with life than the common doormouse winter-long curled in the bole of a tree.

However, it is this very lack, this pain in man that gives answer to the questions, Shall we ever be so? Are we at an end?

Pain is incompleteness. And this ache in us points to the opportunity and gives promise of completeness. Psychiatry today recognizes neurosis as the labouring of a latent greatness; a 'sickness, not unto death but unto life'. Because we pain we may know that we are not at an end. There is something else for us, some state of being for us that is absolute, like a wild rose, or a monastery dove, or a blazing tiger.

Or a Jesus.

That there is more for us is proven by a few moments that we know, and by a few names that we know. A few lives lived out in such beauty as we have ourselves glimpsed and been capable of, but in moments only, when self is low in us and Life has been allowed to leak out. That there is more for man is proved by such moments, and confirmed in the person of a Jesus. Not the mewling, pewking Jesus of the Christians, but the

brave and lively Jesus, the loving, unsentimental, life-quick Jesus.

And Jesus is but ourselves come true.

If we are agreed that there is furtherance for man, it yet remains to have the direction made known. Many have done with all the claptrap of the priests, with after-lives and other heavens. They are content, more, they are bright eyed to make this earth heavenly, and have Eternity now. They look to better man, more moral man, doing good not for heaven's sake, but only for earth's, for goodness' sake; to better societies, regulated and controlled; to needful production where now it is only gainful; to fairer distribution; to brotherhood; to a warless world. It is well thought. But it is mistaken if it is seen as final or even workable.

'A new order will need first new people.'

Those men by whom the reformer might measure and rule his plans, by the light of whose lives the social evils might be sought out, were precisely those men who cared nothing for reform. So often is reform but the means to patch and bolster up the old, to allow it continuance and survival by changing its mask. The ugly monied are ever generous for reforms. But the like of Jesus have cared only that there be a new people, since from out of that, and only from out of that, would all the old forms go, and the new inevitably take place.

To do anything less is to alleviate only, to palliate, to patch. To bring any real lasting change in conditions it is needed that there be some deep change in our own selves. It is needed that we be, not better people but other kind of people, even as Jesus was other than we are, though nothing that we may not be.

Jesus was not a freak but a forerunner.

These free ones are different from us in their becoming, not in their being. They achieve Divinity, are not Divine. Mortals all. Of the earth, earthly. The outcome of a firm-bodied man and a yielding maid. Mortals become Olympians by huge desire and singleness of purpose. Gautama and Jesus and Krishnamurti and the others—all are local lads that have made good.



winged creature, red and gold, a honey-taster, a wanderer in summer gardens.

Of course, I do not *know* anything of the sort; but I have read a little, and looked about, and listened, and gone over my night- and day-dreams. And I do know that there is the ache in me of incompleteness, the pain of purpose. I do know that something not 'of me' indwells, impels me toward some fulfilment I cannot myself charter, toward some freeing, it seems, of what is deep held down inside of me. And freed, I might stand in the sun then, in my own way—which would be Life's way—as smilingly, truly, gaily myself as are beasts and birds and herb and earth and sky and all else that splendidly is. Such live lone joy as theirs might be mine, and added might be an awareness of such joy, a glad delighted all-seeingness. Then the direction of my life would only be Life's direction, and it would no longer be told that 'I am I', but only that 'Life is! I am Life!' And I would be without the need of purpose any more, and without desire, hugely feeling, wholly living.

So I do feel it.

Evolution is at an end in our bodies. Nature has done her part. Life has evolved itself, has fulfilled itself in the self-consciousness named Man; the eye 'with which the universe beholds itself and knows itself divine'. So in the West, by science and speculation, is now being confirmed what in the East, by some other knowing, has long been told: that Life sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the plant, wakes in the animal, and becomes conscious in man. And dances in God, let us now add. Now is the time for man to fulfil Life in that further being he at present fearfully dreams under the symbol of God. God is a name for the fulfilment of man. We are God if we awaken and will it. It is not a matter of time any more. At any moment man may free the Life that is in him, and live in timelessness.

The story is true. The story is *not* true. What can it matter?

What is Life? you ask. My friend, I am a stranger here myself.

What is Truth? said a monk to Fuketsu. Said Fuketsu, 'I always remember springtime in Southern China; the birds sang amongst innumerable kinds of fragrant flowers.'

And why are we at all? Well, why not? Answer me that.

There was a child that lay before the fire and scribbled a paper sheet; and his father came to him saying, 'What are you drawing, son?' 'God,' said the child. 'But', returned the sage, 'no man hath seen God at any time. Nobody at all in all the world, son, knows what He is like.'

Replied the innocent then, 'Well, I haven't finished yet!'

We have not finished yet. There is yet much to be done. We have dreamed overlong and lived too little. And all this wonder on God is idleness. All this wonder Why? Wherefore? Whereby? Where? How?—all is midsummer nightmare, is idleness, as I have told. As men we have asked such things. The one and the only answer is not to need to ask; and in that brave being, we shall be other than we are, and uncaring.

It is so. It is not so. What matter? One guess is as good as another; and any will serve until the real thing comes along.

What I have told here is not *the* true story of the coming of conscious man; it is but one of many true stories. And, for myself, better than the very best of them, I assess sun and grass and gay children, red wine, brown bread and honey.

INDIAN JOURNAL

I

YESTERDAY in the afternoon we saw a row of diseased cows. The skeletons were sticking through. They might almost have been an index to Indranagar—the lack of health in life, the preserved and eating death.

At first you do not feel this. Instead, the town is almost attractive—the segregated bazaar, the open parks, the long white roads, the planters' bungalows, each with a white dignity. An Elizabethan county map. There is the same sense of land reduced to the rectangle, the same precise plan exciting by its order. You are moving through the country and you are looking at geometry.

After a week, you realize that the neatness is anti-vital, the plan is sterile. The flat parks are possible because the land grows only grass. Beyond the bungalows the flat lands stretch into the distance. Occasionally there are groups of mango trees and here and there a palm knocks its brittle fans in the hot wind. But not a crop, not a herd, not a man. Land is so cheap that no one can cultivate it, so cheap that a road system is inevitably geometric. There is nothing to impede it.

During the earthquake, the land was split by fissures and sand was thrown into the air. The banks of white sand still lie in the wide grass land. You realize that the soil is only a skin over the sand.

When you come back to the bungalows, you feel that you have seen the arid loneliness which fascinates our generation—you have seen it at work. Not a painting of the plains with no one in them, but the plains them-

selves. You have gone into them. You have seen that no one is there. They are the lonely regions which excite wishes, which breed images, which stimulate the heart when it lives averted from all except itself.

## II

You feel the same shrinkage of life when you call at the bungalows. This morning we drove through one of the empty parks and stopped at a porch. No one came out. We waited ten minutes, but no one came. Afterwards we learnt that the two men and the single woman had hidden in their bathrooms—it was the horror of a new man. Singh told me once that as he went to call, he saw the shutters hurriedly closed and when he arrived the doors were locked, the house completely silent.

A few of the bungalows are in fact deserted, but as you drive back from the Club in the evening, and look down the roads to their ageing faces, it is as if all the bungalows were abandoned. It is because the lamps are at the back, but as you go you find yourself doubting if anyone is really there.

When you succeed in making a visit, you realize partly what is wrong. The planter population which rose to prosperity on indigo and jute, which built the bungalows, which had its own technique of living, has mostly left the area. It now lives in England, Calcutta or Darjeeling, and the present inhabitants are only remnants of that world, units which have been left behind. To the shrinkage in numbers you trace this shrinkage in living. All of them middle-aged—all bachelors, all spinsters. You enter a bungalow and you notice there are no children. Instead, the walls are filled with the fading photographs of ancestors. You are looking back to the dead. You are living your life in the dead. Even the furniture is historical and you notice that it is years since the walls were white-washed and that everywhere pools of damp have spread. It is as if the bungalow was a corpse and it is rotting.

## III

Coming off the plain this evening, I was amused by the figures of the planters. They were standing like curious effigies in their grounds, almost like corpses stuck on end, wax works that never quite moved. They had ceased to seem like men and were only toy figures in a toy park—mechanical as trees and stiff as iron.

## IV

A few days ago there was a cine show at the Club. Hemingway's brother showed some reels. The planters sat there. The photos were themselves in action—the Easter shoot, the golf competition, the elephants going through the swamp, the flower show, the dogs jumping. The light was not very strong and the images not very clear. But a tension was in the Club. They saw the fragmentary excitement and recalled the picnic in the shoot. The moving pictures of their former action wriggled in the tedium of their mechanical days.

## V

Yesterday as we played tennis, the air slowly expanded—now a moist hand—a sponge gently squeezing—the air waiting for wind. High over the court there were great cocoons of—clouds sagging in the sky—the 'cauliflower' clouds petty and celestial like the buttocks of small children—hanging in the sky, waiting for wind.

The storm was gathering in the north-west. The sky was a thick slate; and then the dust sweeping before the wind, the branches suddenly shaking and swirling, the doors clapping, the lightning quicker and quicker, the wind colder, suddenly rain.

## VI

At the back of the park there is a railway line and every day in the late afternoon a train passes slowly down towards the junction. The long brown coaches,



the long engine, the train across the plain; but it is never actual, never real. The distant heads that look out of the windows—they are featureless puppets, Chirico's dolls. The train itself is a toy. The not-quite-modern coaches, the not-quite-modern engine, the absence of enclosure, the train coming slowly, naturally as a line of cows—I always get a sense of strangeness. It is as if I am Rousseau and I am looking at an aeroplane.

## VII

Yesterday we drove over the great damp plains to Sitalpur. Even the District Board road with its metal worn and jagged and its soling everywhere breaking through—even the road was a symptom of this shrinking energy, the contemporary collapse and decline.

Sitalpur is the ancestral centre of the Raja. There is the tall compound wall, the red-coated guards at the entrance and then a group of massive double-storeyed buildings with a garden. People were walking at the edges of the buildings and occasionally a sleep-stricken servant leapt and ran inside. We sent word of our arrival to the Raja but he was in an upper room speechless and beyond recognition. Fever had stopped him from completing his B.A. at Dacca and he had then taken to shikar, slowly denuding the district of its fauna. It would not be long before he died.

We went into the rooms. Everywhere the stuffed animals posed among the chairs and the birds were on tables—the relics of shikar. The biggest tiger stuffed unnaturally with agonizing jaws, the stuffed tigress with a hopeless eye, the stuffed leopard with the stiff prowl, the bastard hyena with demented claws, the fur dropping, the dust collecting, the tiger's belly patched with a piece of leopard, the tail falling, the stuffed duck with half its head gone, a small rodent perched on its rear legs in a pose of piteous abstract prayer—mercy and mercy and mercy—the hundred tigers shot in the jungles, the hundred crocodiles shot on the sandy

beaches. It was getting dark as we went round the rooms. Each wall had pictures of the Raja—here that massive figure bestriding a tiger, there that satiated eye looking nonchalantly at a dead rhinoceros, the ungainly great posing with the ungainly dead. The stuffed animals became hideous in the dying light—as if they were living in their fixed skeleton poses, waiting to pounce with decrepit paws, waiting to exercise the mechanical fangs, to leap in a joyless dance, the birds to take a despairing flight over the dusty chairs.

We went out on to the long verandah with its row of grisly heads. The skulls of sambar and tiger and in the middle the enormous heads of rhino—the pelt peeling, sparrows racing from horn to horn, white droppings staining the old cheeks. And the stained walls with their squalid white set off the decline of the skulls.

Out in the garden, a tall stork with a scarlet head halted among the bushes and gravely nibbled its grey feathers. It did not move among the bushes. It stood and searched its back; and it still stood and still searched as we left.

There was a monkey in a cage and birds in cages. They also showed the Raja's love of animals—his fascinated absorption with wild life.

The Raja would be dying soon, who had dealt death to many, who had seen the tiger and had lived to kill it, who had combed the jungles and collected tigers, who had rid his district of its life.

After his death, who will disinfect the palace?

Who will clean the jaws?

Who will dust the skins?

Who will whiten the walls?

Who will revere the dusty rubbish?

Who will gasp at the tigers?

Who will break the cages?

Will light and light and light break on the

Tigers and the birds?

## *"Arcturus"*

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### *DIALOGUE BETWEEN A KING AND HIS SOUL*

*The King is alleged to be dying. His courtiers close the doors of his chamber in order that the ancestral spirits should have uninterrupted access. The King's soul appears in the form of a bird, perched on the window-ledge.*

*In the intervals between scenes or cantos, the King's soul makes a tentative flight, and the King sleeps.*

*The King typifies Europe.*

#### *I*

#### *KING*

**I**T IS too late for you to fly : your brothers  
Mustered above the scarlet fields : it is lonely  
To pass so long after the leaves have fallen.  
I will hang a new brocade over your cage,  
And you can wait for spring to warm your wings.

#### *BIRD*

I will go with the quilted nomads of the lakes,  
Follow the beggars' language scrawled in signs,  
In stars and crosses along the secret way ;  
The puddled alleys, the taverns flagged with granite.  
The reedy corners whispering with conspiracy.  
Out of the low clouds, slanting like a discus,  
They spin and drop ; or hammer in a wedge  
Through the blue ice-pack of the frozen sky.  
At night there is a chanting under low arches,  
A shaman's spell, a love tale told in swan's-down,  
A midnight burial under a polished transept.

I will warm my wings at starlight's quivering fires :  
Such are the things you sold to buy me silk.

*KING*

Season by season these will return—you never.  
These come by law immutable—in cages  
Within the seasons' painted caravans.  
Not again will you sing among the mountains.  
You have forgotten the godmother of our land,  
Leaning with gnarled hands on a waterfall,  
Wearing a hunter's trophy of fresh fields,  
Smoke-seasoned vair of never-smiling firs.  
Deep are the shadows, hard below the sky ;  
In spring the resin oozes from the cones  
And points the sleeping eyelash curves with jewels :  
Far sweep the rivers with a triumph of ships.

*BIRD*

I will pass for the last time over the mighty plains.  
There I would stretch my wings like a drowned moth,  
Or open the petals of my heart to float  
Like a giant lily on its peaceful surface.  
I will thread my way among the spirit columns  
That sway and tap their feet on terrible nights  
Across the ritual drum of skin-tight suède.  
I will swim in thought under the pleasant languor  
Of the green wastes : feel their dear heaviness  
Upon my feathers.

But now the moon's scimitar  
Curves from its violet sheath : my thread is breaking.

*KING*

There was the needle of a spire which hemmed  
A showery evening with a fringe of bells.  
By morning, the wayward gulf stream of the summer  
Had brought the thick wove of the Sargasso Sea,  
With the stark ribs of Cytherean galleons  
Wrecked in lost nights on hidden reefs of roses.

Charmed by the sweet oblation of our coffee,  
The sun walked on his golden morning terraces,  
Fingering the nubile flesh of ripened plums.  
All day there was a veil on grass and sky  
The iron pyrites of the tussocks broadened  
Into square centuries of Gothic peace.  
The river moved with the soft clash of scales.  
No straiter was the cage I offered you.

## BIRD

I was the lark that only burned for fire :  
That was one serpent could not slough his skin.  
Long ago I brought his spray to your hearth :  
I cannot sing among the ashes.  
Farewell, all nature's cruel illusion :  
The moonlight lies upon the frosty grass  
Parting the darkness, a valley between glaciers,  
Lost summer doctoring a broken wing  
Among the ice-barred crocus fields of Greenland.  
Beyond, the waters turn their spinning-wheels,  
Weaving the grey lace for the bridal train  
Against their yearly wedding with the wind.  
Clearly I hear the whirring and the voices,  
With neutral sounds which might be tears or laughter,  
Or jostling crowds in old stone market-places.

## II

## KING

I dreamt that you had travelled out of this world :  
I saw you moving above inky waters ;  
I saw a treasure fleet of comets trim  
Their golden sails, and set their courses for  
The distant glow of island universes,  
Huge rocks of light in phosphorescent seas.  
Say, do the larks sing over those yellow sheaves ?

*BIRD*

Oh King! I have travelled far across your realm.  
Your purple cloak is fresh on moor and field.  
Your fathers still remember you in their prayers  
In farms and castles before Elizabeth.  
They little think that in an hour or so  
They will be disinherited.

*KING*

Indeed, they gave me little cause.  
Those who are woven into the tapestry  
Can have no need to fight for place and portion.  
Each gives his share, and without envy gets  
The glory of the whole. It is a new departure  
To burn with envy for the dead.  
Brothers now envy brothers; fathers, children;  
And, it would now appear, children their fathers.

*BIRD*

It seems the laws of inheritance contain  
Some fallacy; when every man's a king  
He has two courtiers—vanity and pleasure.  
The man we recognized as truly man  
Portrayed himself in the mirror of his loves.  
Within that only was his life unique.  
A prophet's stature grew with his following.

*KING*

Man has no arcane spring within himself.  
He seals himself into ennui and self-hatred  
Which, later, turns as envy on his brothers.

*BIRD*

Strange to relate, among the loneliest,  
The proudest, and the greediest, is the cry  
That each is fatally torn within himself.  
The very core is disunited: buildings  
Work with cement that will not hold the stone.  
The glass cracks as the glazier fits the pane.

*KING*

Within a single being, a family,  
Or yet a petty kingdom, there can be  
No true fulfilment : the soul has many parts  
Each of which seeks its mate : the very world  
Was not enough for those we call its saints.  
Such as we are, the fruit of long refinement,  
Sophisticated, meticulously selective,  
Demand a wider and yet wider field,  
And time, and times beyond all numbering.

*BIRD*

I will go out into a sleeping world  
And find your ravished jewels : were the crown  
Complete at last upon its velvet throne,  
I could remain, to see a rising sun  
Kindle each crystal in its proper setting.

*KING*

Beware the powerful in humility  
Who found an empire upon righteousness,  
Who throw their virtue to you as a gauntlet ;  
Whose catholicity and whose kindness must  
Be trenched behind an obstacle of concrete  
For fear a thief should take their fortune from them.  
I will to sleep, and dream of Charlemagne.  
Be once a nightingale, then on your way.

*BIRD*

There was a quiet land where all days ended  
Plunged as a burning brand into grey waters :  
Anger bled to the sea through sober streams,  
Quenched its candescent tongue in dim Atlantic.  
Years in their generations did not cherish  
Legends of blood passed down like poisoned goblets,  
Jewels whose lustre burnt a line to ashes.  
Banners unstaffed we swept up in the autumn.

And with our bale-fires purged the summer's surfeit,  
Firing the withered weeds with statesmen's speeches.  
Hard winter was a legate from the half-  
Forgotten lands of Christmas tree and sleigh-bell,  
And, as we sought our childhood in the shadows,  
Hearts like lit windows glowed through the  
misty evening.

### III

**KING**

There is a gallery in the house of sleep  
That takes the earliest beacon-glim of day.  
There the soul wanders through its pictured past  
Till, as it nears the corridor's end-casement,  
It sees the heavy curtains wave aside  
Before the slow, grey-feathered wind of dawn.  
It hears the cock-crow : at once the clocks are ticking.  
The dream in lightning clarity reveals  
Our own life's day transfixed in love and sorrow  
Upon that wall : remote and lost, but warm  
Under the glowing oils ; unredeemable,  
A heart that has been buried whole, and beats  
Under the shroud :  
Such was my dream : how terrible the Time  
Whose heart is stopped, whose blood will not run cold.

*BIRD*

Under the eaves, I met the year's last swallow.  
I said 'I take my world upon my back':  
'Show me the cloudless strands where I may build  
'Its little straws into a nest of peace  
'Far from these sullen children of the smoke  
'Whose rags no longer patch my leaking nest.'  
He answered 'Come with me, and you may share  
'Half the Atlantic that weighs down my wings;  
'Brood on your dainty eggs of porcelain:  
'They will hatch out a progeny to mourn  
'Your age-long exile from these derelict eaves.'



## KING

My shade was lost beside the confluence  
Of the great rivers : the polished basalt arches  
Already told the story of the hunting  
That gored the soft flanks of my mammoth flock.  
Warsaw and Moscow, London, Paris, Rome,  
Madrid and Athens : each a Chimaera fabled,  
The unicorn, the gryphon, the macara,  
Generate once in Time, irreproducible,  
Each part-begotten, part-imagined, lay  
And called to its wounded sisters through the night.  
Each was a font from which the holy water  
Could re-baptize into the great Fellowship ;  
Now draining back into the untilled marshes.  
A wind moved with the current, and I saw  
Among the stalagmites the beating plumes  
And towering breasts of my three guardian swans—  
Of Mantua, of Arno, and of Avon.  
The first sang of an ultimate Age of Gold  
Conceived below the winged orb of the Caesars :  
The second, of a temporal unity  
Divorced for ever from the spiritual power,  
Whose crown confirms each soul an emperor :  
The third, of an humanity beleaguered  
By Caecodaemons and blind demiurges,  
But greater in the tale than any of them.

## BIRD

I hovered above your sepulchre, and watched  
Darkness and legend overlay your form  
With stealthy lime : the fateful stars that moved you  
Float down, and sink into your sightless eyes ;  
Your teeth change into pearls of literature,  
Your dusty throat chokes with the wires of harps.  
I saw your splendours, your follies, and your crimes  
Through restless centuries at rapier's length  
Across the gold-strung fields of tapestry  
That hid the wasted vigour of your limbs.  
But round your tomb the limbless begged for crusts,  
And naked paupers dreamed of fleece and linen.

**KING**

I see a children's land, where buried childhood  
Fertilizes the forests and the fields.  
Enrobed in princely fatherhood he lies,  
And we, the sons and daughters, the sophisticated,  
Drive the new century in shouting steel  
Across the till. Oh see how, in the spring,  
His phoenix feathers in the birch uncurl,  
His phoenix voice in poetry enthrals  
The haunted hills, the castle under the lake.  
Oh see his waxen fingers in the spruce  
Burn among stars that were his names of destiny  
When the fleeced night drew down upon his cradle.  
He is the timeless sunrise of the lark,  
He is the changeless love of grass and trees,  
He is the troubled memory of the sea.

*BIRD*

We will walk safely in the valley of lions ;  
Before the blazing furnace-mouth of lions,  
Where the outriders curb their pistoned barbs  
And the sun's thunder brings a rain of steel.  
His veins are ore, his slowly minted speech  
Utters in iron rivets between nations,  
And builds a rainbow tower of many tongues.

*The palace minstrel is heard in the courtyard outside.*

## MINSTRELS

Our thoughts by doubt disjointed took counsel of  
meek surrender,  
In ebbing hope we turned again to the night-light's  
peaceful glim,  
But death is the pre-appointed nurse who sits by the  
fender ;  
For Yesterday is his domain, Tomorrow is not for him ;  
For whom, we wonder in vain.



Her sari cuts the air with prima-donna's gesture. Her posture is the posture of horrible accusation. No man of any race could hear this woman's act and remain comfortable.

Flushed and damp of curl, our hero is American. He strangles himself with the effort of producing no words. He stands in light on the bonnet of a fine army truck. Differently clad he might be a Roman gladiator.

An older and more legal American, practised in manners of the tongue, finds outlet in gesturing duet with a ponderous Hindu of municipal aspect. Grouping the roadway, lighted by wandering beams, minor characters bark and twitter, living out their idiosyncracies to the finest detail. Women wail. Further and more obscure women wail from the shadow of wing-like huts. A vendor of jaggery lights his candle, shades it with a toffee-tin and moves into position. Somebody spits. A girl arranges her sari with quick thin fingers. A tired person walks into darkness.

Again the many bony fists are raised in thunderswell of international fury. The production is flawless. A flag is brandished like a schoolmaster's birch. A funny American tries a joke and is punched by a diplomatic American.

The woman casts herself to the ground and rolls magnificently, weeping real tears and well upstage. Old men lean to her like wands in a consoling breeze. Tied among painful thoughts, red of nostril and swollen in the neck, the hero shrugs and shifts his feet on the bonnet. He can't get away. Can't speak. Feels pretty damn low. He's in a spot.

Deep in the road and totally unloved, parted from the last thin crimson trickle of its blood, the child is quiet.

Naked lies the child and free, unseen, divided from argument.

## GANGBO NOKMA CHIPO RAJA

SEVERAL centuries ago there lived a man named Gangbo Nokma in one of the ancient villages in the south-western portion of Achik Ahson where a division of the Achiks took to ploughing under their chieftain named Lengtha Raja. The name of the village has been buried in oblivion long ago and its site overgrown with trees and grass for many, many years.

Gangbo Nokma was very wealthy and powerful; withal he was a quick-witted, crafty, pragmatic and proud individual. Because of his haughty and domineering ways, he was extremely unpopular with his neighbours. Though outwardly they feared him, inwardly they meditated his ruin.

One day all the elders of the village held a secret meeting in which a plan was hatched to burn Gangbo Nokma's house with himself and his whole family in it. The victim of this sinister design found out about it and secretly removed all his money, jewels and riches and buried them in a nearby forest. All other articles of value were quietly removed to convenient places. The man himself went about as if he were wholly ignorant of the intrigue against him.

The next night the enemies of Gangbo Nokma securely fastened the door of his house and set fire to it. However, Gangbo and his family escaped unscathed through an opening in the back wall which he had previously prepared. The next morning to all intents and purposes he assumed the role of a completely ruined man. He told the villagers that the ashes of his house were all that he could now call his own, and that with them he would be able with little difficulty to raise a bigger fortune. So he filled up a dozen or more sacks with ashes and carried them in the direction of the

market town. However, on the way he stealthily threw them into a river.

Now the villagers had seen him carrying away the ashes; but they were not interested in what he would do with them, since most of the people believed that the man had gone completely off his head in collecting ashes and walking towards the market town with them. Gangbo himself dug up his money and precious jewels and proudly marched into the village with them in broad daylight. In the sight of all the villagers he began to count his coins and proudly display his jewels. The onlookers were very surprised at his sudden acquisition of wealth. With bated breath, they eagerly asked him how he came by it. He replied :

'The ashes of our dwellings are in great demand by some foreign merchants in the market. It was very fortunate that my house was burnt. Its ashes brought me more money than I ever had before. You should remember that what apparently seem to be calamities are often blessings in disguise.'

Gangbo argued with the villagers in such a convincing manner that they at once burnt up their own dwellings with all they had in them and filled up sacks with the ashes. Then they marched together to the market town and offered the ashes for sale. The market people laughed derisively at the wares of the villagers and looked upon them as lunatics and half-wits for wanting to sell such useless things as ashes in the market place. At this the villagers were beside themselves with rage against Gangbo. They returned home empty-handed and determined to kill all Gangbo's cattle and eat them up. They were met by the man himself who politely expressed sorrow that it was natural that they should now wish to vent their rage upon him, but that they would be doing him a great wrong. He said :

'I feel sorry for all of you since you've come back empty-handed from the same market from which I returned loaded with wealth. All I told you was that I got the money by selling the ashes of my house. I

did not ask you to burn your own houses; neither did I say that you would be blessed with the same good fortune as myself. So you see, I am far from being the cause of your disaster. Pray do not think of doing any wrong against me or something worse may happen to you in the long run.'

The villagers would not listen to his entreaty, but forcibly took away all his cattle and slaughtered them. Gangbo implored them to be merciful and spare him the skins of the animals at least. They granted this request, since they had no use for the skins. Gangbo took the skins of his slain cattle, dried them in the sun, punctured some of them so that they might appear more useless than ever, made strong bags out of the remaining ones and marched out of the village, taking a southern road.

By and by Gangbo came upon a very rich cultivator who was ploughing his field, a few hundred cubits distant from his house. Gangbo introduced himself as a travelling leather-merchant who was ready to buy good and bad skins alike, and asked the man for a drink of water. The farmer directed him to his house, saying that his children were there and would give him a drink. Thereupon, Gangbo went to the farmer's house and told the man's children that their father had sent him for his money and jewels. Instinctively, the children refused to show the stranger the place where their father's wealth was stored. Gangbo then yelled out to the farmer, saying:

'They say they will not give it. They say they will not give it.'

The farmer, busy as he was with his ploughing, did not bother himself about what his children were really refusing to give the stranger. He simply surmised that they were denying the man a mere drink of water. So he brandished the stick, with which he had been goading on the ploughing animals, in the direction of the children and cried out angrily to them:

'If you don't give it to him, I'll use this stick on you. This stick!'

The children obediently showed Gangbo a big earthen pitcher filled to the brim with money, but sealed at the mouth. Gangbo speedily broke the seal, poured out all the shining coins into his crude cowhide bags, rolled these inside the pieces of punctured hides and marched off towards the cultivator to allay the suspicion of the children. He thanked the man for the drink of water which in reality he had never taken, and joyfully made his way back home to his native village, now a richer man than ever. On the way he discarded the punctured cattle skins.

Gangbo eventually reached his village and poured out all his coins from the leather bag in the presence of the villagers and began to count them before their very eyes. The onlookers were amazed at the immense sum of money he exhibited. They asked him how he acquired such a huge fortune. He replied :

'If you want to become rich, kill all your cattle. Do not spare any. Skin the slain beasts. Puncture the skins; and go and sell them in the market as quickly as possible. You made me richer by killing all my cattle, thus enabling me to sell their skins at an opportune moment. Adversities do not ruin a man, if they come at the time when the tide of fortune is up.'

The credulous villagers straightway killed all their cattle, dried the skins, bored them through and through and took them to the market for sale. Nobody there wanted to buy the skins which they spread out for all to see. As a matter of fact, the villagers were taken to be crazy fools for attempting to sell such useless punctured skins.

While the villagers were at the market, Gangbo set out for the same place to enjoy their embarrassment. On the outskirts of the market he met a travelling cloth-seller who was accustomed to sell rare and precious cloth on credit, if he felt satisfied with the house of the purchaser. Now, near the wayside was a cluster of well-built houses, the owners of which were all absent in the market on matters of business; for market day then,



as now, was a red-letter day in the lives of all the villagers. Only the children were at home.

Gangbo entered one of these houses and asked some small children for a drink of water. He seated himself on the porch while the children fetched the water. As he drank Gangbo talked freely with the children as if they were his own. The clothseller came by, and seeing the man and children on the porch, anxiously approached with the sole purpose of making a sale. He showed Gangbo the cloth and offered to sell some of it to him. Gangbo replied humbly that he was really in need of new cloth, but at the moment had not cash on hand with which to make the purchase. Thereupon, the seller graciously offered to let him have some of his wares on credit, amounting in monetary value to several hundreds of the standard current coins of those days. Gangbo readily accepted the kind offer.

Now the travelling clothseller was not fully acquainted with the vernacular of the place. He asked Gangbo to show him his own house and to give him his name as well as the name of his father. So Gangbo politely showed him the house where he happened to be and said that it was his own. Then without the least embarrassment he said that his name was Onjawa, which meant 'Will-not-give', and that his father's name was Manjawa, which meant 'Could-not-get'. Both these words were spoken in the local dialect with which the clothseller was unfamiliar. However, he took down the names of Onjawa and Manjawa as genuine person's names, handed over cloth of the rarest kind to Gangbo, took careful stock of the house and its surroundings and departed in glee at having made such a successful sale. He told the buyer that he would return in a year for payment. Of course, when the clothseller did return after twelve months to the same place to demand payment of the house owner, he was met with much opposition. The owner denied all knowledge of Onjawa and Manjawa, became angry with the insistent salesman, belaboured him with the help of a few neighbours and left him half dead by the roadside.

Now, when Gangbo purchased the cloth on credit, he bound it up neatly and returned proudly to his village. There, he dressed himself in the rarest cloth and appeared like a man about to be married. In the meantime his co-villagers who had been severely ridiculed at the market place for attempting to sell punctured cattle skins were returning to the village, full of wrath against Gangbo. On the way they solemnly vowed that they would straightway put the deceitful man to death in the cruellest possible way. This way they decided was to bind him up, put him in a bamboo basket and drown him in a pond far away from their native village. For this purpose they prepared a huge, strongly-bound basket.

When the angry villagers arrived home, they came upon Gangbo when he was attired in his new clothes. They wasted no words with him; but silently seized him, tied him up and thrust him in the basket previously prepared for the victim of their wrath. Then they took up the basket and carried it away to a distant pond. When they reached the spot, they were very tired and hungry; so they decided to eat first before getting rid of the miscreant. They put down the basket on the bank of the pond under the scorching heat of the sun, and walked away a few hundred yards to take their noonday meal under the shade of a large banyan tree. As soon as they were out of sight a young cowherd came along and curiously examined the strange basket. It was the custom of this particular boy to come daily to this place to give his cattle a drink. This day he brought about a hundred head of cattle with him.

The boy discovered Gangbo in the basket and asked him what he was doing there. The captive replied in a mournful voice :

'I am being taken against my will under orders of our king to be the bridegroom of a beautiful princess. She is madly in love with me, so the king has decided to take me away by force to be the husband of his bewitching daughter. I do not love her. The servants of

the king left me here alone. They saw that I could by no means escape.'

The boy listened with mouth wide open; and Gangbo glibly went on: 'They've gone to the palace of the king to announce that I am being brought there by force so that great preparations for the marriage festival can be made. Soon they will return with more men, bringing, no doubt, a royal carriage to take me hence. When I reach the palace, I shall be wedded by force to the charming princess amidst much rejoicing and to my great chagrin. It is because of my having to wed a princess against my will that I am crying and weeping. Moreover, I am in love with a beautiful peasant girl who to me is the sweetest, fairest, purest and dearest girl in the whole world. I want her alone for my wife. I tremble to think of encumbering myself with power and riches by marrying the king's daughter. His ministers have assured me that I could escape from this ordeal, if I could only find a proxy who must be either a farmer like myself or a cowherd like you. Hitherto, I have found no one to help me.'

Now this particular cowherd had been leading a very hard life, minding a large number of cows and calves every day. He was amazed at the wonderful things Gangbo revealed to him, and thought that the man was a fool to decline marrying a princess merely for sentimental reasons. Presently he said to Gangbo:

'Were I in your place, I would fly like a bird to the palace even now. Why not send me as a substitute?'

'Quick then,' exclaimed Gangbo. 'If you are really serious, untie the basket and let me out; give me your tattered clothes and don my gorgeous wedding apparel. Get into the basket and remain silent. Cover your face under pretence that you are in deep sorrow when the king's servants come to bear you away. I'll become a cowherd in your stead.'

The boy willingly exchanged clothes with Gangbo in the shortest possible time, got into the basket and allowed himself to be securely tied up. Gangbo him-



spot where they believed they had kicked Gangbo into the water. There they brought a lot of food and rice beer and made a merry feast in anticipation of the huge herd of cows, bulls and calves which would soon be theirs. With glad hearts they got into the baskets and boisterously bade Gangbo tie them up securely and kick them into the water. So great was their desire to reach the supposed happy region underneath the pond!

Gangbo tied up the baskets one by one and finally rolled them all into the water, shouting as he did so :

'Now at last your own iniquity overwhelms and destroys you all.'

Soon countless bubbles were seen rising in the places where the baskets had tumbled. The villagers were all drowned like rats because of their stupid credulity.

Gangbo went back and took possession of the villagers' lands and property and made their wives and children his subjects. He grew rich and powerful and lived happy ever afterwards, ruling over an extensive tract of country as an independent Achik chieftain. He was ever renowned for his sagacity, astuteness and foresight far and wide. The name of Gangbo Nokma Chipu Raja was indeed a name to be reckoned with among the Achiks for a good number of years.

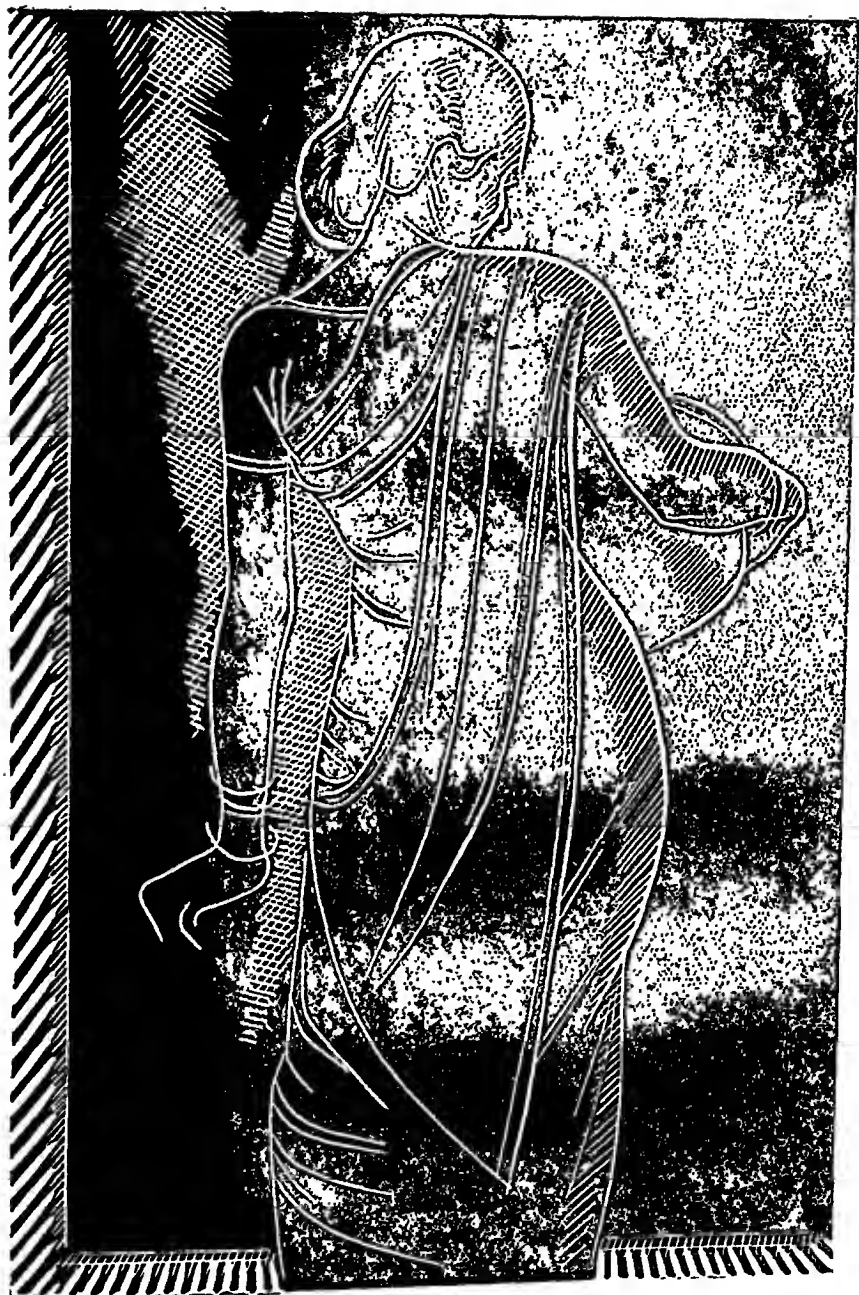
*This is a story from the author's unpublished  
'Folklore from the Garoland'*

# MELODY OF THE STARS

*(Sarud-i-Anjam, from Pyam-i-Mashriq)*

OUR joy the statute past repeal  
That rules us, fashioned of our life's breath,  
And our eternal voyage the seal  
Of infinite reprieve from death;  
The heavens revolve with our desire; we watch  
and travel on.  
This pageant of the world of sense,  
This idol-hall of sound and seeing,  
This strife of being and not being,  
This conflict born of sentience,  
This realm of Time swift-winged or slow, we watch  
and travel on.  
The heat of battlefields in flames,  
Those follies that ripe brains invent;  
And crown and throne and palace spent,  
And princes beggared of their names—  
All ribald Nature's pleasantries, we watch and travel on.  
The master fallen from his estate,  
The slavery of the slave undone,  
Dread Tsar and Kaiser struck by fate,  
Proud Alexander's darkened sun,  
The age of idol-carving waned, we watch and travel on.  
That mortal dust, so still, so wild,  
So frail, so mighty in its toil,  
Now in the roystering hall beguiled,  
And now borne shoulder-high, Death's spoil,  
A monarch and a branded slave, we watch and travel on.  
Your mind weighed down with doubtful thought  
Pants in the tangled web of Cause,  
Like the gazelle the noose has caught  
Whose quivering heart affliction gnaws—  
From our exalted watch-tower here we watch and  
travel on.





*Linocut by L. M. SEN*





*Linocut by L. M. SEN*

Do you envy your sisters, little Gopi,  
Who scramble out of charabancs in shoals  
'Just picnicking' on long-distance motor tours,  
Shading their gapes with sunglass and topee,  
And giggling at you gesticulating parasols,  
Wishing to God (all the time) they had breasts like  
yours,

Do you envy your sisters, little Gopi?  
Would you rather change your chattee for cement  
And stumble—a hundredweight upon your head  
Across concreted roads—dust greying your hair  
And the Gold Mohur in it spent?  
Your granite is dead,  
But fifteen hundred calories a day  
Is worse than death—despair.  
In dumb abandon to superior force  
You clutch two little bundles to your hips,  
Little limbs loathsome with lice and pain.  
You are no slave! Hence there's no Wilberforce  
For you! You are free and on your lips  
A smile—a toothless, hollow repartee  
Answers the Mistri's toil-cajoling cane.  
You, little Gopi, are free!  
You are safe, little Gopi; all is well  
Until the skies once more rain T. N. T.  
And in this new display of man-made-hell  
From piles of fractured rock and granite chips  
A soldier lifts your head, chews, and says 'Gee,'  
'A goddamned dame! The cutest little belle!'  
And there's a real smile upon your lips. . . .

LONG-LIDDED, heavy eyes  
That slant  
Sidelong and petal-wise,  
Petals of lotus-blossom;  
And sensuous, curving lips  
That hover poised between a smile  
And cold commemorative calm;  
Gracious and soft of line  
Sinuously magnificent  
Curving to majesty;  
Dark hair that breathes  
The fragrance of immemorial spices  
Wafted through aeons  
To the present,  
To where you stand before me  
As we stood in the long ago.  
While your long heavy-lidded eyes keep watch  
Languorously warm  
Above full lips that hold  
All Life's elusive mystery,  
Keeping proud watch above  
Triumphant curves.

## *AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH USAGE IN INDIA*

### 1

THE problem of the English language in India is, no doubt, one that can be profitably approached from many sides. The historian, the politician, the pedagogue, the statistician, each has his own approach to the problem and his own contribution to the understanding of it. It is doubtless profitable to learn how and by what stages this alien language has come to occupy the prominent place it does in our daily lives. It would be worthwhile, too, to know who among our great names have been masters of this language and have contributed to its literature. It would be tempting to inquire, on the one hand, how the study of English has promoted a national consciousness in India and has served to unify its people, and, on the other, how far the prestige attached for some decades now to the possession of English has proved detrimental to the development of our own tongues and the fostering of our indigenous culture. There is not a little to be learnt too from bare facts and figures, percentages and proportions, regarding the degree of penetration English has succeeded in making into the various strata—provincial and ethnic groups, religious castes, urban and rural sections—of our heterogeneous community. The methods by which English has been, or can be, taught in school or college, and the suitability of Basic English for our needs, are among the many questions to which answers may well be sought. Above all, from the national point of view there is the pressing need to examine the extent to which English can immediately

be replaced by the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at all stages of education. Indeed, a self-conscious nationalism may well go further and question the advisability of retaining English as even a compulsory subject in our educational institutions.

These and other questions arising out of our long association with English it would be interesting to have brought together in a comprehensive single study or collection of studies. In the meantime it is with none of the inquiries indicated above that I choose directly to concern myself. Naturally there are certain basic assumptions underlying this essay. Two of these must here be explicitly stated. The first is that English must, sooner or later,—and it will, probably, be sooner than later—cease to be the medium of instruction even at the University stage. The second is that English, and not merely Basic English, will continue to be a compulsory language at one stage or another in the educational process for a large section of the people. It is in the light of these prejudgements or postulates regarding the larger issue of the Future of English in India that the present study of our use of English must be read. It is only because English still has some future in the country that an examination of the present state of its idiom in our midst is at all worthwhile. At the same time, it is because the future of this language in the country will be very different from what its past has been that an essay like the present one is in the nature of both an adventure and an exercise.

## 2

That our English, both spoken and written, is in many ways unsubtly as well as subtly different from that of the Englishman is, of course, another of my basic assumptions. It is one nobody will be disposed to question, but it is necessary to pause to ask : Why is it different ?

The question is not really a difficult one to answer. There are, to be sure, aspects of it which we perhaps do



exaggeration to say that in India the cart of literature is put before the horse of language: a rudimentary knowledge of English spelling and grammar is generally deemed sufficient for a headlong plunge into English poetry and drama, it being taken for granted that, equally for one to the manner born and for the stranger less fortunately circumstanced, the study of literature is also, simultaneously, the study of language. It certainly can be even for the foreign student, but not easily. In any case, neither the true-born British teacher of English nor his Indian *locum tenens*, has been able to make it do this—the one, because he naturally has been unable to see his pupils' difficulties from the inside; the other, because, though he may see them, he equally naturally is not always in a position to remove them.

Consequently, there is but a mechanical, superficial, and vague understanding and appreciation of both the language and the literature. But this is not all. Since the young pupil is obliged—or, at least, was obliged till the other day—to learn everything through the medium of this mysterious tongue, his mind is often but a welter of misty images and half-digested ideas; it is the slave rather than the master of words. It is not only Anstey's fictitious Baboo Jabberjee who exhibits such a mind; if he literally does not know what he is talking about when he speaks of being 'saturated to the skin of his teeth' and the like, no more do many among us. For my part, I have met the fathers of such monstrosities as 'wedded to the path of violence', 'threshed out all avenues', 'reformed and turned into a new leaf', 'knocked about like a weather-cock from pillar to post', and 'a white peacock, an absolutely pitch white one'. It is obvious that strange verbal memories haunt their minds and get into the way of their speech. An ill-assorted phrasal memory is the store-house on which they draw for their expressions and, consequently, counterfeit sounds pass with them for sense. The following extract from an undergraduate's essay which I had the misfortune to have to

examining is perhaps as good a specimen as any of how English should not be written :

Science has kindled the incentive love of power. The glowing incentive for blood-thirst is flamed furiously in the forge of Science and its distinctive inventions. Science has added to the wisdom of National powers. Effectually what were thought to be good to humanity, good to the world advancement, good to the modernization, helpful to the nations and treasure to the nation's pride, have all been humbled down to utter dismay in matters concerning the civilization of the world, in affairs relating to the erstwhile thirst for supremacy, in events to the deluge of man power.

'Utter dismay' indeed !

But even where there is no cause for utter dismay, where the pupil has managed to escape from the system with his wits unimpaired, he rarely does so without his English idiom at least showing some traces of the educational process to which he has been subjected. For the English masterpieces with which the Indian school-boy is so early saturated are scarcely the proper pabulum on which to feed him in order that he may be able to use the language for the business of everyday life. The result is that it is not the supple, homely idiom of living speech but the more or less stately or elegant forms sanctified by literary tradition that, not unnaturally, the young Indian pupil learns to respect and imitate. It is a commonplace, accordingly, that the average Indian user of English can, elephant-wise, lift a linguistic log with fair ease but cannot pick up a pin ; he can, that is, muster a vocabulary and a style adequate possibly for the expression of the weightier matters of life or literature but far too prim or pretentious for the thousand trivialities of everyday life. He can, it is complained, be learned and literary, but he cannot, as a rule, be colloquial and light. Thus, he tends to use *ancient* or even *antique* rather than *old*, *demise* or *decease* rather than *death*, and *bosom* rather than *chest*. He is inclined to applaud with *comely* or *resplendent* rather than with *pretty* or *dazzling*, not to *men-ripping* or *topping*. He can be either *blithe* a



or, on the other hand, *melancholy* and *despondent*, but seldom is he *jolly* or *moody*. Not, of course, that there is not a time to be *blithe* as well as a time to be *jolly*, a time to be *melancholy* as well as a time to be *moody*. There is a time both for the words he overuses and for those he overlooks. The trouble with him is just the trouble of the learner who acquires a language almost entirely from literature and the written word and hardly at all from life and the spoken word, and acquires it, besides, against an uncertain background of the necessary history and tradition: he fails to perceive that there is an atmosphere about words, a faint, not easily defined aroma about them, which makes them appropriate in certain settings and inappropriate in others.

'They have been to a great feast of language and stolen the scraps,' was Moth's shrewd comment on the pedantry of Armado and Holofernes. Borrowing the image, we may well say of hundreds of Indian users of English that they have been to a great feast of literature and so either—from not having sufficiently strong linguistic constitutions—suffer from mental indigestion, or—from not having tasted often enough the delights of homely fare by the linguistic fireside—consider elaborate viands and choice wines more suited to even the most informal occasions than plain bread and cheese and home-brewed ale.

But even when we have said this we have not said enough. Not only do most of us talk as well as write like books—and not so good books at that—we are also constantly in danger of talking and writing like old books. It is not only that we do not talk or write like plain present-day Johnson or Robinson; it is also that we too often talk and write the English of Samuel Johnson or Robinson Crusoe. For are not those English masterpieces that we are brought up on written, for the most part, in an English which is, or approximates to, Shakespeare's or Pope's and not Shaw's or Priestley's? In the circumstances it is only to be expected that the young scholar's expression should often sound quaint

to ears attuned to twentieth-century English. He will possibly *ask water* or *pursue after* something, or speak of people *gathering themselves together* and *behaving friendly* towards one another. He may call a handsome man *geodly* and add that he is *higher* than the average and *reared up* or *bred up* in such and such surroundings. When the English of these utterances of his is dismissed as unidiomatic or incorrect it is perhaps not always realized that what is wrong with the expressions in question is not that they are utterly un-English but that they are English in an obsolete idiom, the idiom, as it happens, of Shakespeare and the Authorized Version.

Now, if on leaving his school and college days behind him the average Indian youth came out of the backwater of academic instruction and entered the healthy living current of plain, matter-of-fact, everyday English—such as, in Macaulay's phrase, people make love in—all might yet, linguistically speaking, be well enough with him. But most often he but falls out of the frying-pan of the literary English of the rather musty masterpieces of the schoolroom into the fire of legal, official or commercial jargon. In the sequel, if he was inclined to be literary and old-fashioned before, he is now apt to be stilted and verbose and pompous as well. For in his new environment he constantly hears everybody utter their English by formula. They invariably acknowledge, not *letters*, but *communications* and, of course, *reply to the same*; and they are so humble—Uriah Heapish almost—that they constantly *beg to state* and *have the honour to be*.

No, neither the clerk at his ledger or typewriter, nor the official in the secretariat, nor the lawyer among his quibbles and his quiddities, can even dream that he is drinking at the well of English undefiled. Consequently, if anything, his last state is likely to be worse than his first. For, in most instances, so painful presumably are his memories of the English masterpieces that he was obliged to ply so diligently in the days of

his nonage that he does not pursue his interest in this language of painful memories or its literary monuments when he is no longer obliged to do so. Possibly, he reads an English book now and again, but for the rest, his professional dealings with English apart, there are the newspapers and magazines and similar products of avowed journalism. An English journal or two—a daily almost certainly, and possibly a weekly or a monthly as well—may be among these, but the odds are heavily against any of these being other than Indian publications and, therefore, very largely, if not entirely, written and edited by Indians. As he thus reads much more of indigenous English than of British English, he stands little chance of being weaned away from his singularities of idiom.

## 3

I have stressed the necessity of studying the living language. But what does acquiring the living language imply? In order to answer this question we must look a little more closely into the relation which a people's language bears to its literature, history and traditions.

A language is much more than a mechanism of words as recorded in a dictionary and of constructions and forms as determined by the grammarian: it is essentially a people's mind made articulate. It follows that even if one should acquire enough skill in a language to be able to reproduce all its sounds exactly and handle its vocabulary accurately, deviating by not a hair's breadth from its grammatical structure and syntax, one may still not be master of its subtler idiom and quality to the extent of being able to penetrate through it to the mind of the people who moulded it and have been moulded by it. In other words, knowledge of mere linguistic mechanics is only a knowledge of the lie of the land; one may still be ignorant of the riches it contains.

For every language has a store of private wealth hidden from the casual eye. Beneath its external form

and structure, behind the apparent meanings of its words and phrases, there always is a peculiar national tradition. How rich this secret vein is in English the late Sir Denison Ross has illustrated in his valuable little guide-book, *This English Language*, which he calls an experiment in language teaching. I cannot do better than quote from the introduction to this book.

It has long appeared to me that in the case of all living languages a large and important element essential to their complete mastery has been almost wholly neglected. This element is by no means easy to define, but, briefly, it may be said to comprise the national store of quotation and allusion which every educated individual acquires in his own language, both by conscious study and by unconscious assimilation from his childhood onwards, and from which he draws in order to lend colour or to give emphasis to the spoken and the written word. This stock-in-trade or repertory may be said to form the physiognomy of a language, as grammar and vocabulary form its anatomy.

Just as many families have household words and expressions of their own invention which are meaningless to outsiders, so has each nation a fund of allusion which is often unintelligible to foreigners.

In English this linguistic background is exceptionally rich, and without some acquaintance with it no foreign student can be sure of understanding all that he hears or all that he reads.

It ought to be obvious enough from the above that mastery of the living language presupposes, among other things, an appreciation of the spirit of its literature. For it is in the literature that the national genius, of which the language is itself an expression, finds perhaps its fullest and finest expression. I hope, therefore, that I have not seemed to contend that the Indian student of English would be more proficient in the language if he was insulated from contact with the literature. All I have deprecated is the premature and disproportionate attention paid in our English teaching to the literature. It has, apparently, been assumed that an early plunging of the pupil into the broad stream of English literature would be conducive to a better acquaintance with the cultural background.

of the language. But the process has served only to demonstrate the futility of seeking to escape from the vicious circle of ignorance, which starts with inadequate knowledge of the spirit of the language, moves through a consequent failure to comprehend, much more appreciate, the literature, and returns upon itself in a failure to acquire the cultural background so necessary to a real understanding of the spirit of the language. In an alien atmosphere and, for the most part, under inexpert guidance by teachers themselves outside the tradition of the language, the Indian learner has, generally speaking, acquired through this process neither an adequate appreciation of the literature as literature nor ability to wield the language as a living tongue. Knowledge of the private linguistic idiom of English is still very rare among us. How could it be otherwise when we have not grown up to English but have been pushed into it, when we have been made to run before we have quite found our linguistic feet, when Shakespeare and Shelley and a host of the great ones in the vast literary tradition of England are hurled at our heads before we have really understood, not to say assimilated, the rules of this alien linguistic game?

The fact is that the vicious circle cannot, in the circumstances, ever be really broken. How many of us *can* grow up to English as the native learner does, in the traditional company of English *Nursery Rhymes*, Grimm's and Andersen's *Fairy Tales*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Bible*, *The Book of Common Prayer*, Classical Myth and Legend and the like—all enjoyed in an atmosphere of English History, English Legend, English Sport, English Humour, English Festivals, English Food, and in a setting of English Life in Town and Country, in School and University? And if—to use an expressive phrase of Aldous Huxley's—we cannot be 'pickled in' the English tradition, we cannot expect to be able to speak and write English as the Englishman does. Our ability to master the finer points of his language must neces-

sarily be limited and, altogether, we cannot but use it with a difference.

Mastery of English acquired by an early and effective steeping in English life and history and tradition the average Indian must ever despair of attaining. But if the hidden wealth must always in some measure remain hidden from our alien eyes, can we not, under proper direction, seize at least that which lies on the surface? Alas, even the surface of English speech is not easy to survey. It is full of pitfalls and of gins. The general outline of its landscape—its grammar, that is—does not appear to be particularly broken, but there are, nevertheless, innumerable hillocks, muddy pools, and endless thorny hedges to trouble the wayfarer. English pronunciation is notoriously chaotic; English idiom is teasingly eccentric.

Consider for a moment the chaos that is English Spelling. The bewildering variety of sounds the Englishman manages to get out of the single combination *o-u-g-h* is too well-known to require further emphasis. Nor need I do more than mention similar phonetic ambiguities such as *bow*, *row*, *sow*, *gill*, *read*, *tear*. But consider how deceitfully such a seemingly straightforward consonantal combination as *c-h* behaves: in *church*, *child*, *debauch*, *eschew*, *Ipswich*, *champaign*, to mention no more, it doubtless behaves as you would expect it to; but it spells 'k' in *chaos*, *chemist*, *choir*, *chasm*, *chimera*, *distich*, 'sh' in *chauffeur*, *machine*, *chagrin*, *avalanche*, *chaise*, *champagne*, 'j' in *spinach*, *Greenwich*, *Harwich*, *Norwich*; and—most trickily—comes to nothing at all in words like *yacht* and *drachm*. And talking of arch-deceivers, there is *a-r-c-h* itself: compare, for instance, *archbishop* with *archangel*, or *Archibald* with *archipelago*, or *archer* with *archetype*. Against seemingly simple, single letters too you have to be on your guard: watch, for example, the antics of the symbol 'g' in *target*, *ginlet*, *gibberish*; *gibber*, *gibbet*, *longevity*, *longitude*; *mirage*, *camouflage*.

Nor is it merely that the same letter or letters may not consistently represent the same sound. Complications arise from the other end as well : the same sound may be represented by different letters. Notice how the identical 'q' sound emerges from under three very different orthographical thickets when one reads : 'Taking my *cue* from him, I stood in the *queue* for the bus going to *Kew*.' Look, if you please, at the words *sit*, *horse*, *ass*, *crevasse*, *scimitar*, *schism*, *listen*, *isthmus*, *sword*, *psalm*, *hence*, *waltz*. They present to you no fewer than a dozen different ways of uttering the simple sound 's'.

Finally, there are what, in the poet's words, we may term 'fallings from us, vanishings'. You never know when a syllable, or even whole syllables, may fade away under your eye and leave not a phonetic wrack behind. The Strange Case of *Cholomondeley* and the *Marjoribanks* Mystery, as I may call them, are well-known; but *Leicester*, *Worcester*, *Gloucester*, *Salisbury*, *forecastle* and *victuals* may also be mentioned as victims of such syllabic hocus-pocus.

One may sum up the case by saying that English orthography, like Providence, moves in mysterious ways. Indeed, for plucking out the heart of the phonetic mystery of English words there is, on the whole, nothing more misleading than its spelling. The late Lord Cromer's witty verse-critique of the eccentricities of English pronunciation has often been quoted in this connexion, but can never be quoted too often.

When the English tongue we speak,  
Why is *break* not rhymed with *freak*?  
Will you tell me why it's true  
We say *sew* but likewise *Jew*?  
*Beard* sounds not the same as *heard* ;  
*Cord* is different from *word* ;  
*Cow* is cow, but *low* is low,  
*Shoe* is never rhymed with *foe* ;  
And since *pay* is rhymed with *say*,  
Why not *paid* with *said* I pray?  
And in short it seems to me  
Sounds and letters disagree.

Indeed, if one may be permitted the pun, sounds and letters, as we have seen in several instances, are not always on speaking terms.

The problem of correct pronunciation is, however, a minor part of the whole question of linguistic usage. It arises only when a language is spoken, whereas the irregularities of its phrasal idiom have a bearing on the mastery of the written form as well. And the irregularities of English idiom are also many and bewildering.

Take a couple of aspects of the Englishman's use of his Articles. He goes *to school*, *to college*, *to church*; but he is free to go also *to the school*, *to the college*, *to the church*. Yet, oddly enough, he can go only *to the university* or *to the theatre*, and never *to university* or *to theatre*. This is because in regard to *school*, *college*, *church*, he makes a distinction between the functional notion and the merely local; that is to say, he goes to *school*, *college* or *church* for mental or spiritual uplift, but he goes *to the school*, *the college*, or *the church* if he is asked, say, to dine with the Headmaster or the Dean or to rehearse the choir. And yet, for reasons not very obvious, he makes no such distinction in regard to *university* and *theatre*. He goes up to *the university* on leaving school exactly as he goes to *the university* to visit his old tutor years after he has left *the university*. Similarly he goes to *the theatre* whether to witness a performance given in it or to attend to its electric installation. Nor, for that matter, is the Englishman more logical when he talks of Brazil, on the one hand, and of *the Argentine*, on the other; of Siberia now and of *the Crimea* or *the Ukraine* presently.

There is doubtless a satisfactory enough explanation for every such apparent whimsicality; but the explanation is not on the surface while the whimsicality is. What, in the circumstances, is the poor foreigner, not to the manner born, to make of it all? You perhaps know what the Frenchman on the boat-train made of the warning 'Look out! Danger ahead!' Like the



logical Latin he was he promptly looked out, only to meet the danger more than half way! Are we surprised that, when he regained consciousness, his first words were: 'O these mad Anglais! they say "look out" when they mean "look in" '?

Certainly verbal idioms like this one of the story are calculated to trip up any foreigner. What would the newcomer to English make of it if he heard a doctor tell his convalescent patient, 'All you need now is to be *fed up*,' and the patient retorted, 'But I am *fed up*, completely *fed up*'? Or if he was informed that one jockey *pulled up* unexpectedly as he approached the winning-post and so lost the race, while another *pulled up* equally unexpectedly and won it? There are, too, numerous miscellaneous puzzles to perplex him. If we follow the fortunes of our newly-arrived Frenchman, we may well see him inveigled by a couple of pub acquaintances into standing them drinks, since, as one of them quietly puts it, 'my mate here *hardly* drinks, if at all, and I either drink *hard* or not at all.' Poor Jacques! he learns his first lesson in adverbial idioms too the hard way! And yet, when thus put on his guard against subtle differences, he cautiously looks for them in, say, *under compulsion* and *upon compulsion*, behaving in a *shameless* way and a *shameful* way, being *in a temper* and *out of temper*, *beating* somebody and *worthing* him, he may, incredibly enough, be told by an English friend that he is wasting his time.

Everything considered, we should hardly blame him if he threw up his word-book and recrossed the Channel. Certainly we should commend his doggedness if he refused to quit even after his foreigner's curiosity had made him the victim of the staggeringly idiomatic sarcasm: 'Hi! What are you goggling *at round about from out of* your gig-lamps?'

English is certainly not an easy tongue for a foreigner to master. There is, doubtless, some satisfaction to be derived by us from this realization. For where we stumble, others may—in fact, do—stumble too. I am not here thinking of the tendency common

to all who seek to express themselves in a foreign tongue to dress their native idioms in the foreign garb and naively hope that they will pass muster. I have in mind at the moment only those usages which originate in a sheer failure to appreciate the finer points of English idiom and which, therefore, are cases of 'ignorance, pure ignorance' of the ways of English speech. Indeed, these are not confined to Indians, or Frenchmen, or Germans, or mere foreigners; books like *The King's English* and *Modern English Usage* reveal only too clearly that they are shared in some measure by educated Englishmen themselves.

Thus, if our *family members* is impure, so also are the analogous phrases used by the British and French writers of the following :

I recognize the fine spirit of those *University members* who have declared against fighting (in the famous King-and-Country debate of the Oxford Union).

(Gerald Gould in *The New Statesman*, 28 Oct. 1933)

... how *Group members* looked upon him . . . .

... its (the Book Society's) *Committee members* . . .

(Graves and Hodge, *The Long Week-End*, pp. 206, 334)

The *State servants* are the prime benefactors. . .

(André Maurois in *The Spectator*, 27 Oct. 1933)

If, again, we err in saying *at his sight, through its medium* and the like, for *at the sight of him, through the medium of it*, etc., we do not err alone. Witness the following utterances culled from native as well as foreign users of English :

A Polish youth... caught his imagination and the old grey-haired giant shivered *at his sight*.

(Tenenbaum, *The Riddle of Sex*, p. 54)

Open my lids but a moment and grant me

Sight of *thy sight*.

*Oxford Book of English Mystic Verse*, p. 588)

... seeking *thine intercourse*.

(*Ibid*, p. 586)

He dared hell for *your possession*.

(R. L. Stevenson, *The Bottle Imp*)

Or consider the following miscellany of utterances, none of them Indian, but all of them unidiomatic:

They made life *worth-while living*.

(Tenanbaum, *The Riddle of Sex*, p. 9)

... at which occasion. (*Ibid*, p. 12.)

... made a virtue *out of necessity*. (*Ibid*, p. 33)

Two-thirds of his energy *are* absorbed. . .

L. Cazamian, *Criticism in the Making*, p. 12)

Most of the critics of today *dabble with* psycho-analysis.

(*Ibid*, p. 113)

By the corner of her eye . . . she glimpsed a tall forlorn woman.

(Arnold Bennett, *The Old Wives' Tale*, p. 540)

... stages of pronunciation through which *the* Modern Standard English has passed.

(Nicklin, *The Sounds of English*, p. 21)

... we, *man for man*, stand for the ideals of our Chancellor

(Some German Citizens of Calcutta in a letter to *The Statesman*, 12 July 1934)

We ask ourselves *whether* . . . *would we* . . . feel and behave as they do?

(Bonamy Dobrée, *Restoration Tragedy*, p. 13)

For *both* the dramatist and audience had *not* the modern psychological interest and bias.

(E. E. Stoll, *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*, p. 79)

English, both written and spoken, is thus strewn with many a Serbonian bog for the unwary. There is all the more merit, therefore, in our achievement in wielding this whimsical and ill-taught foreign tongue competently enough on the whole, and sometimes even with marked distinction. 'It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all,' observed Dr. Johnson of a woman's preaching, which he compared to a dog's walking on its hind legs. 'It is not always spoken or written particularly well, but you are surprised it is spoken and written as well as it is,' is in substance the comment of not a few of Dr. Johnson's countrymen on our English.

THREE POEMS

BUMPKIN

How poignant now this green is in my mood.  
The brittle upbraiding may-boughs  
(Piquant, unrestrained the flower)  
Slanting to the sky;  
The cuckoo's cylindrical call  
Admonishing our will to discontent.  
Acrid morning winds accompany  
The tautening corn, each in its turn  
Soul-piercing, walking the woods  
In their lyric green.  
A sultry nightly owl lambasts  
The sprightly fairies of the groves,  
And the cypress proudly sallies in the moon.  
I can think too of the humped blackberries,  
Soon to be glistening on the trim-growing hedges,  
Where, now, only the first descent  
Of paling, dansant blossom can be seen.

LOVE POEM

AND as she glanced . . . .  
And in the firm caressal of her eyes,  
the frail summers of her breasts  
pinioned the ruined ardour of the centuries.  
she called . . . .  
the garbled lays, the flaccid ruminations sank  
as I followed, acolyte,  
to the cool coombs of her desire . . . .

*THE BEGGAR : After Hafiz*

I BEING but a lover of love,  
I care not if she  
be faithful to me, or faithless.

Athirst with my sorrow, I care not  
if we be one or parted.

If I find not my life upon your lips  
where then may I find it?

If this love can slay me  
should I fear a Sultan's menacings?

To me barefooted, needy, destitute  
of what use would be a prince's treasury?

The eyes of my beloved are my Mecca  
for every thought and every new desire; my heart  
knows of no other pilgrimage.

Were I to wish  
that thou and I might lovers be, alone  
in all the world, why  
should I set my heart on Paradise  
and its undying houris?

He who is lost amid the maze of love  
scorns agony, mocks  
at grief; he, Hafiz,  
yearns no remedy.

SIX POEMS

KNOWLEDGE

When I lift the hammer and bring it down with all my might, I know why there is a ripple of buoyant health in every movement of the daily labourer and why the idle millionaire haunts the nursing homes and searches the map for sanatoriums—when I lift the hammer and bring it down with all my might!

When I handle the plough and drive the bullocks on, I know why there is always a song of joy on the lips of the humble peasant and why the haughty zamindar goes about frowning alike on his servants and tenants—when I handle the plough and drive the bullocks on!

When I take the spade and dig the earth in earnest, I know why the honest gardener sleeps in sweet content and why the pompous prince turns about restlessly on his velvet-covered divans—when I take the spade and dig the earth in earnest!

When I stop my work and wipe the sweat off my forehead, I know why there is always a smile of freedom in the eyes of the gifted craftsman at his work and why there is a haggard look on the face of the pot-bellied magnate in his office—when I stop my work and wipe the sweat off my forehead!

A PRAYER

Not the silvery peals of laughter that come from a Count's hall of feast, my Lord, but the countless sighs of pain that rise from a beggar's bed of dust—let that be the music that touches my heart!

Not the glitter of gold and gems that go to share a courtier's glory, my Lord, but the dirt that covers

the knees of a pilgrim who prostrates himself daily before Thee—let that be the sight that pleases my eyes!

Not the sceptre of power to rule amidst the sin and squalor of this Earth, my Lord, but the promise of freedom to roam among the stars with the angelic hosts—let that be the vision that thrills my being!

Not the tempting call of Mammon to drink deep of the luxuries of life, my Lord, but the cry of my fellow-beings who groan under the yokes of illness, poverty and serfdom—let that be the voice that wakes my soul!

And if my soul ever goes to sleep again, my Lord, let it be in Thee and only in Thee!

### *THE CHOICE OF LIFE*

**T**HE light that burns at the window of my beloved beckons me to make a long honeymoon of life.

The halo that hovers over the heads of saints challenges me to find a better reward of life.

The wine that sparkles in the hands of the enchantress invites me to make an endless feast of life.

The joy that lights up the faces of philanthropists asks me to join their ranks by sacrificing all that I have in life.

The jewel that dazzles the eyes from its place on the crown calls me to taste the power of conquests in life.

The pageantry of fame that perpetuates the memory of the dead prompts me to make an endless labour of life.

The star that twinkles from the zenith of the deep blue sky reminds me of the higher and eternal aspects of life.

And here I stand, in the midst of it all, ever doubting, ever hesitating, to make the choice of my life.

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*A WAKENING*

**W**HEN I see the blind and realize with gratitude how perfect my vision is—even then, my Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I have been setting my eyes on sinful things, instead of studying the lessons of wisdom which Thou hast given in the Book of Nature!

When I see the deaf and realize with joy how perfect my hearing is—even then, my Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I had bent my ears to vain gossip and wanton talk, instead of listening to Thy ever-advising, ever-admonishing voice of guidance!

When I see the lame and realize with pride how strongly my legs are made—even then, my Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I have been using them to trespass on forbidden ground, instead of keeping myself always on Thy path of Truth!

When I see the dumb and realize with thankfulness how Thou hast gifted me with a silver tongue—even then, my Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I have used it in the past for coaxing the passing shadow of Fame, instead of proclaiming Thy greatness and Thy love!

When I see the sick and realize with pleasure how Thou hast kept me in constant health—even then I am filled with shame to think how I have been using it in the blind pursuit of worldly pleasures, instead of helping my neighbour to bear his burden!

When I see the poor and realize with contentment how Thou hast blessed me with wealth and power—even then, my Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I have been using them as a means to keep me in the lap of Luxury, instead of spending a penny to feed the hungry or clothe the naked!

When I see the dead and realize with rapture that I am still alive on this good Earth—even +



Lord, I am filled with shame to think how I have been a curse to my friends and a loss to Thee, instead of being a boon to them and a gain to Thee!

### INGRATITUDE

ANY complaints?' asked the poet of everything that came his way, wondering all the while why he found them far from being gay.

'Any complaints?' he asked the lonely cocoanut tree which looked so sick and sore.

'Sir,' said the tree, 'I offer fruits to the hungry and shadow to the weary, but only to get cut down and burned when I yield no more.'

'Any complaints?' he asked again of the old and homeless dog that appeared round a corner.

'Sir,' said the dog, 'I served my master faithfully for eight years and ten, only to be kicked out when my teeth and throat had failed to serve!'

'Any complaints?' he stooped and asked the humble grass, which whispered back with a deep, deep sigh:

'I always bow my head in obeisance, but, alas, only to get trampled upon by everyone that passes by!'

'Any complaints?' he asked next of a sad-looking sheep, out of deep compassion for the poor beast.

'Sir,' said the sheep, 'I give all my wool to my master without a word of protest, but only to get pounced upon whenever he wants to make a feast!'

'Any complaints?' he asked at last of a gentle pigeon which sat brooding in the sun.

'Sir,' said the bird, 'I carry their messages fast and far away from home, but, alas, when I outlive my use, they chase me with a gun.'

The poet moved on silently and unresolved on his attitude towards a world which was so sadly full of ingratitude!

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*FRESH HOPES*

**T**HE first glow of dawn gently shook me from my sleep and whispered in my ears : 'Arise, the day is full of hopes.'

The early birds that alighted for a moment on my low-thatched roof sang : 'Something great may happen today.'

The morning breeze that glided in through the open window caressed my cheeks and said : 'Perhaps, later in the day, I may bring you tidings of joy.'

The day waxed into a warm noon. And I sat at the steps of my humble cottage hoping that something great might happen soon.

The day waned into a gloomy dusk. And still I sat there hoping that, from the east or west, from the north or south, tidings of joy might come.

But, alas, nothing great did happen, nor did any tidings arrive !

The night came and found me weeping silently at the steps of my humble cottage. She came in all her charms with a wonderful necklace of glittering stars on her heaving bosom. She came to me and said : 'Rise up, my darling, and revive thy hopes ; for I bring thee a new day in my wake.'

## THE MAID-SERVANT

ME AYE is a maid-servant, working in the domestic establishment of U Tet Pyo, a broker of the town. Her monthly wages are only three rupees. Fair and tender are her features and demeanour, and her character and temperament are all that could be desired. She comes from an out-of-the-way village where she lived with her widowed mother and her young sisters and brothers. The mother is an invalid, and Me Aye has to walk the streets and lanes of the village to hawk a few sweet-meats to earn a trifling bit of money on which alone the whole destitute family lives. But her 'business' does not thrive well, and eventually the small outlay has been swallowed up by the family expenditure. She tries again, this time by borrowing a little money from a money-lender on the pledge of repaying with interest in daily instalments. This system also fails in the long run, for the cost of living for the whole family, with the cost of medicines for the invalid, which is as essential as the cost of living, simply neutralizes what little profit is gained, as well as a portion of the outlay, so that at last the outlay has disappeared altogether.

Now there is no way out for Me Aye. She is wondering what she must do next to feed the invalid mother and the children, when, fortunately, U Tet Pyo comes with his family to the village on a pleasure trip. In the course of a casual conversation with Mrs. Tet Pyo, Me Aye is offered the job of a maid-servant on three rupees a month. Being so down and out, she jumps at the offer, and leaves her mother and her sisters and brothers to follow U Tet Pyo's family to their home in the town.

Having never left the parental home before, Me Aye feels deeply. Her old mother gives her a never-ending sermon on how she should behave while in the employ of the master's family. Being an ignorant village girl, sentimental and unsophisticated, Me Aye feels a sharp twinge in the heart when she embraces and pats her younger sisters and brothers. She can never in her life forget the sad tone of her mother when she gives her maternal blessings at the time of farewell kowtow.

Now in the domestic service of the broker, Me Aye works hard, U Tet Pyo and the mistress have one son, the eldest of the children, and three daughters. U Tet Pyo is a silent, good-natured old man, who seldom talks about family affairs. Mrs. Tet Pyo, on the contrary, is a very talkative lady, fastidious and officious. The eldest daughter has a bad temper. The second one spends all her available time in beautifying herself. The youngest has a proud heart. Me Aye does not know anything about the son, for he has been away in some town with a job.

Me Aye is under a three-year contract. She gets up at four in the morning to cook rice for offering to the monks and at the family altar. After having done that, she has to heat some water for the family face-washing. Then she has to prepare coffee.

Then she goes to the bazaar to buy meat and vegetables. The cooking of breakfast commences with all its elaborate process, and she has to do it with great alacrity to enable the family to take breakfast in time. Breakfast over, Me Aye has to start the routine work of scrubbing the floor, dusting the furniture and washing clothes, which takes her into the evening. Coming as she does of a decent family, though poor, she sometimes cannot check the rising wave of loathing at the sight of the dirty linen, especially the women's skirts. But what is that after all, when she thinks of her daily duty of carrying the chamber pots of the family in the early hours of the day?

The evening comes with a full programme of work for her. She has to go to the bazaar for a second time in

the day to buy some more to add to the menu for dinner. The tastes of the various members of the family vary. The old man likes to have at least two or three good dishes of curry at every meal. His wife cannot go without some curry heavily spiced and full of butter. The eldest daughter relishes a bowl of wholesome soup. The second one does not care for any curry unless it has an overdose of cooking oil, and has a nutty taste. The youngest one, however, likes it somewhat sour and salty, and somewhat pungent. Me Aye has to cope with such varied tastes with bazaar money of only twelve annas, and the family resents any repetition of the morning's items in the evening's menu. So it is a great problem for Me Aye, this bazaaring. She has to think hard to choose the sort of vegetables and meat that could satisfy each one in the family.

After dinner, Me Aye has to iron the linen she has washed in the daytime. Then she has to prepare *thanakha* and other scented things for the mother and the daughters to smear their faces and bodies with. When night falls, she has to prepare the beds for all the family. Then she boils water to serve the family with green tea, for it is the custom for some Burmans, especially the Upper Burmans, to sip green tea through the night till they go to bed. After having set the teapot on the table, she goes to where the mistress is reading the day's newspaper, and waves a fan for her, and also for the three daughters who are sitting near by. A little while afterwards, she has to massage the mother, as well as the daughters in turn. The three daughters then go to bed; but the mother does not as yet. She goes, as usual, to the family altar attached to the house, and reposes before it in the posture of prayer. Me Aye has to follow her there to wave a fan to keep her cool and free from mosquitoes, while the mistress is doing her spiritual exercises.

With the whole family gone to bed Me Aye retreats to her kitchen, but her time for rest has yet to come. She has to finish off some pieces of work left undone during the day owing to pressure of work. She has, for

instance, a few plates left to be washed, or her frayed clothes need some mending. Only after she has put everything to its proper place, she has to go to bed, which is just a dirty-looking mat unrolled on the floor of the kitchen. Being so tired from the day's work, Me Aye is fast asleep, with a heart that is glad that a day has been done with, and that she has earned some mite for her old mother.

The monsoon is over, and it is the end of Buddhist Lent, which is celebrated by the Burmese people with a lighting festival. The whole town is illuminated, and one comes across rows and rows of lights wherever one turns one's face. Thus the streets are lined with lights, the façades of houses are decorated with festoons of lights. The moon is riding its cloudless way, and a gentle breeze is fanning the crowd of merry-makers who swarm the streets.

The son of the broker has come home on holiday from the town at which he has been working as a Government official. The whole family is happy at the return of the son, and this joy adds to the festive mood in which the family, like many another in the town, has been caught. Even the usually taciturn broker falls to talking loud and long, and the whole house is agog with a babel of noises. Joy and festivity have joined to soften the heart of the eldest daughter. The second one, with her beauty-complex, has done her utmost at her toilette. Even the proud youngest one assumes a condescending air, and joins in the general conversation with hearty laughter.

Me Aye looks at the family about to set out to the lighting centres for sight-seeing, and feels happy. The lighting festival, with its attractions, comes but once a year, and naturally Me Aye feels like going out sight-seeing. But realizing that she is in a lowly position, Me Aye has discreetly refrained from asking permission to go out. She has to watch the whims and fancies of the family, and is afraid to offend. Even if, for argument's sake, she is asked to accompany the family, she cannot afford to leave the

house, for she has a lot of work to do. If she puts by the work for this hour, then it will pile up in the next hour. Domestic duties are such that they cannot be put by or postponed. If things are not ready in time, then there will come chiding and scolding. Me Aye casts a long, sad glance at the family leaving the house for the festival.

Two years have passed. One day she meets a man from her village, who informs her that her old mother is lying seriously ill. She is so slow and uninterested in her work all the day long. She is afraid that the broker may not grant her leave to go back to her village to see her ailing mother. After much hesitation, Me Aye timidly approaches the family with a request for leave. None of the family likes to let her go to see her mother. Even the most essential worker has off-duty periods, and is entitled to leave. But Me Aye, only a humble maid-servant, cannot be given leave. Off-duty periods she has never known; she cannot have enough time to keep sabbath during Lent. Nor has she been given a chance to keep sabbath during the Water Festival and New Year's Day. The denial of off-duty periods does not affect her in the least. But the denial of leave to visit her mother has hurt her painfully.

Ignorant, loving and sentimental, Me Aye pictures to herself her old mother in her sick-bed, and her heart is gripped with anxiety. Now however anxious I may be, I simply can't get to the bedside of my mother, she mutters to herself. She thinks that the only possible way to help her mother in sickness is to pray fervently for her recovery, and so she mutters prayers incessantly, while deep in her heart is a lingering regret at her fate which has thrown her into servitude.

The family, however, goes on in happiness, paying little heed to the distress of their maid-servant, who has faithfully rendered her service to make their life comfortable. But the enslaved girl has been sadly counting the days that remain between her and liberty.

## *TWO RUPEES*

**S**EETHEVI was a nalava woman. Nalavas were untouchables. They were originally serfs tied to the land and they specialized in climbing palm trees to tap toddy. They are legally free today, but social equality is still a distant dream.

Seethevi's husband was an agricultural labourer. His earnings were not enough to keep body and soul together, and she had to supplement the family income by hawking vegetables on market days and by making jaggery from sweet toddy. Life was hard, but what was harder was the fact they hadn't a child. Seethevi wasn't barren, but the children she had borne had not lived for more than a few hours. Four times it had happened thus, and her despair knew no bounds.

After each confinement her husband had consulted a parvaikaran (one who 'sees'), an astrologer-cum-medicine-man-cum-black-magician, to find out why Fate was so unkind to them. He had consulted a great many of them. Some had said that Saturn was annoyed with something Seethevi had done in her past birth, others said the stars were not particularly auspicious for them at that time, and yet others that enemies had done sooniam, black magic, against them. The remedy, however, was always the same, a devil-driving ceremony, some black magic rites.

When Seethevi was expecting her fifth she went about asking everybody for advice, and got plenty of it. 'It's all Fate, your Karma,' they told her. 'There's nothing you can do about it. Human beings are mortals and are powerless. Pray hard that your luck be better this time.'

Only Ponni told her something different. 'Go to



hospital for your confinement,' she had said. Ponni was her neighbour's daughter married to a man who worked as a sweeper in the Electrical Power Station at Jaffna town. She had come to her village on a visit and Seethevi had gone to her for advice.

'To hospital?' she asked surprised.

'Yes,' Ponni said emphatically. She was a town dweller and wanted to impress others that she knew a great many new things.

'To hospital for a childbirth? Isn't our kothi (the traditional village midwife) good enough? She's the best for miles around.'

'She may be all right, but in hospital they do things better.'

'Better? What is it our kothi doesn't do properly?'

'Everything is different in hospital. They put you in nice clean clothes. The midwives, nurses and doctors are all in white. They boil everything they use. . . .'

'Why all this? Why use such clean clothes for this dirty business? Foolish waste, isn't it? Kothi wears her dirtiest when she goes for a confinement.'

'I don't know why they do all these things, but they say dirty clothes carry disease. May be it's true. My last two babies were born in hospital, and I didn't get any fever.'

'Not even a little bit?'

'No.'

'That's strange. I've never heard of a case of childbirth without fever. After so much pain how can the body be without fever?'

'I don't know, but hardly anybody who goes to hospital gets this childbirth fever. What is more, the babies rarely die. . . .'

'What? Really? Can it be true?'

'Yes, absolutely true. I live close to the hospital, and my husband's friend Soori works as a scavenger cooly there.'

'It's hard to believe. Most children who are born die, only few survive. Why, my own mother had

sixteen babies but only three lived. 'That's so with everybody. Nature is like that. . . .'

'But I tell you it's different in hospital.'

This made Seethevi think. She was silent for a while. Then she asked: 'Is it expensive to be in hospital for childbirth?'

'No, in the Government Hospital it's free for poor people. Rich people have a nice time, but we can make things comfortable for ourselves. If you know some attendants or give them small presents, things can be really pleasant. I'll help you.' Ponni was happy she had found at least one person in the village to listen to the wonders that happen in town.

Seethevi was determined to have her next baby in hospital.

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It was difficult persuading her husband about hospital. The kothi was his aunt, and he was proud of her professional skill. But in the end Seethevi had her way, and he promised to take her to the Civil Hospital.

Soon everybody knew she was going to hospital for her next baby. It became the talk of the place.

The old kothi heard of it, and she was furious. 'Why do you want to go to hospital? Am I not good enough? Even the good caste people still call me for their child-births. In old days everybody did, but now new-fangled folks go to hospital for a simple thing like a childbirth. What is it they do there I don't do? Hospital is no place for childbirths. They cut and chop people to pieces there. Hundreds die there every day. That foolish girl Ponni has turned your head. . . .'

Others said similar things but Seethevi was not to be shaken from her resolve.

And one day while making jaggery she began to feel out of sorts. She knew the pains would come on soon. Her husband was away. With an aunt she set out by bus to Jaffna town 12 miles away. She went straight to Ponni who helped her to enter hospital.

Everything there was strange, but soon after her arrival pains started in real earnest and she hadn't time



After some time, the nurse went out. She was away only a few minutes, but when she came back she found the patient by the dirty linen basket untying a knot in a corner of her saree.

The nurse was shocked and angry. How did this woman climb down unaided from that high bed in her condition? This was one of the most serious and difficult confinement cases they had had in that hospital for a long time, and the doctor had given strict orders that the patient was not to move at all for many hours. Was this woman mad, thought the nurse, to risk her life like this? She shouted at her: 'Why did you get down? Didn't I tell you not to move? Do you want to kill yourself? You're a fool. . . .'

'Don't scold me, nachiar,' she pleaded. Only when the nurse heard the word 'nachiar' did she realize who this patient really was. It was not often one heard the term nowadays. Only in the more backward villages did untouchables still use these honorific titles to address their superiors. Seethevi shivered as the nurse glowered at her. 'I didn't mean any harm, good lady,' she whimpered. 'I didn't want to disobey you, but I had some money in this knot in my saree and I was afraid to lose it. You see this is all the money I have in the world. I saved it for this day specially. It's to buy something for the baby in case he should need anything. . . .' There were tears in her eyes as she held a two rupee note in her hand. 'Pardon me, good lady, pardon me. I won't do it again.'

Dumbfounded the nurse didn't know what to say. As she led Seethevi back to her bed she murmured: 'Why didn't you tell me? I would've got it for you. . .'

Tears welled in the nurse's eyes.

*Mulk Raj Anand*

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## *THE ROAD*

THE hues of the morning change under the sun like the colours in the kaleidoscope. The delicate sepia of the dawn gives place to tiny pin points of light under the gummed pupils. And, as the eyes open, there are zigzags of fine rays, dazzling and diaphanous. Then the red and amber refulgence of the sun floods the earth and there is no dark corner in the house where one can rest. Only the grove around the creaking Persian wheels of the well afford some shelter, or the trees which line both sides of the road.

The child knew the changes in the tempo of the morning as vividly as he knew the feel of his mother's body. He could close his eyes and see the alteration of every particle of light almost as though he possessed second sight. And, unknown to his parents or his brothers, he had evolved a life of his own, a life of adventure under the shades of the grove and on the road. Only one person shared this secret with him and that was the old gardener, who drove the bullocks yoked to the wheel of the well.

And, of course, sharing the secrets of the adventurous life together, a great friendship had sprung up between the shrivelled-up old gardener and the child. So that the old man would lift the child and put him on his seat, on the bracket behind the bullocks, give him his stick to keep the animals aware of their duty and go and mend the ditches of the orchards around the bungalows. And, riding on this roundabout, to the sweet, shrill rhythm of the creaking Persian wheels the child felt as though he was riding a chariot like the heroes of the Mahabharata which the gardener had told him about.

'Come, come, my horses, run fast, for we go to battle!' the child shouted. 'Faster still because I am Krishna and I have to lead Arjuna into battle . . . .'

The bullocks hurried at the touch of the stick on their haunches. And, because the child's own name was Krishna, the mimed pose of the legendary charioteer leading the Pandu prince into battle was complete for a moment.

But as the bullocks went round and round and did not seem to get anywhere near the open battlefield, the child felt frustrated, the illusion broke, and he called to the gardener :

'Ram Din, how far is the battlefield?'

'You go, you will get there by and by,' answered Ram Din.

The child goaded the bullocks with little shrill shouts and abuse exactly as he had seen the old man do and he beat the animals hard, his cheeks colouring a vivid pink rose, his large, innocent eyes flashing fire, his little weak chin outstretched, his whole body intent on getting there, into the thick of the fray. And, as the pace of the bullocks quickened, he felt he was getting places and jumped in his seat, eager, impetuous, whizzing past the greenery around as though the path to battle lay through enchanted gardens. But, as the animals slowed down, and the rhythm of motion dissolved into the slow crawl, round and round the crying wheels, the child knew that he was only the namesake of Krishna and not the God he fancied himself to be.

He got off the seat at the end of the shaft and ran towards the gardener with tear-dimmed eyes.

The gardener saw the overtones of disappointment on the child's sagging face and, with a deliberate intent to sustain the illusion, said :

'Ah, Lord Krishna, so you have come after all! And where have you left the chariot? Oh, there, I can see. I, Arjuna, have sharp eyes . . . . And tell me, pray, is the hour auspicious for battle? . . . .'

And he began to hack the tall weeds with the sickle in his hand.

'No, no, you have to look at the opposing hosts and say "I will not fight" and then I have to give you a discourse on the battle. That is what mother says . . . .'

'Ah, of course, that is right, but I am anxious for battle and must destroy the reeds. We will consider your discourse as given. The battle has begun. . . .'

And he became busy with his job.

'I will not play like that,' the child said. And, making a wry face, he ran away towards the road. And, seating himself on the charpai of the watchman, dangling his legs to the irrepressible rhythm of his body, he began to intone a nonsensical ding-dong song without words from his throat, even as he swayed his head to the tune in his mouth. And the whole universe before him became coloured with the aura of this song, as though his eyes had gathered up each nerve and fibre of his being and were looking out like the windows of his soul into the kingdom of gladness that they had made of the world.

The hoopoe which sat on the telegraph pole became the Phoenix. And, already he imagined himself a King, for had not the bird passed right over his head, and hadn't the gardener told him that if the Phoenix passes over anyone's head, that person becomes a King. And he immediately stretched his neck upright, adjusted the *mukat* on his head, as King Vikramadittya was said to do in ancient days, and benignly smiled at the trees and the saplings which were arrayed on both sides of the road. The stick with which he had goaded the bullocks on the well, he tied to the lappel of his shirt on the left hand side for a sword, and pinning an ant which was crawling along under his foot, he hoarsely shouted to his court: 'Silence, I proclaim, attention! Keep quiet while the procession of my subjects passes by!' And, of course, the trees, the birds, the whole breathless morning sincerely obeyed.

And lo and behold! just at that time a drove of donkeys went cantering along with empty sacks on their backs and young Rahmat riding on the tallest of

their herd behind them, his stick upraised and his foul tongue shouting abuse.

'Don't kick up so much dust!' Krishna objected imperiously, drawing himself up to his full height in regal rage. 'Can't you see that your monarch is there?'

'Ohe go, ohe go, go and rest in your mothers!' Rahmat shouted. 'I am on my way to load my donkeys at the brick factory. I am doing a job of work.'

And, brandishing his stick with the presumption of a rebel, the master of the herd of donkeys raced away.

'Dare he insult the King!' Krishna shouted as he got up and ran after him with sword unsheathed, acting as his own policeman and calling aloud: 'Courtier wind, arrest the culprit and put him on the gallows! . . . .'

'Your orders shall be obeyed, Maharaj,' said an old beggar who came bearing his sick son on his shoulders. 'Only give a pice.'

'Here's a pice, old man,' said the King, holding himself back from the wild goose chase and putting his hand into his imaginary coffers with the most benign of gestures.

'Get away, get away, out of the way.' A call disturbed His Majesty from an oncoming tonga.

Half frightened by the perverse rustle of the heavy-voiced carriage driver, Krishna retreated to his charpai. Then, with a ponderous sweep of his vain head, he held his sword aloft like the Commander-in-Chief at the New Year's march past on the parade, and stood watching, erect, his eyes like two balls of fire. And as the tonga rattled past and left the air filled with a silent dust, and nothing stirred or spoke for a while, His Majesty felt that the procession of his subjects was now passing before him according to plan, and with a due sense of respect for his great dignity. And the colours of the morning changed from a dull sun-soaked white to a golden hue, the tense particles of air, which had carried the smell of dust in them, became redolent of a sense of excitement, the greenery of the trees and the garden hedges seemed to be levitating and rising



in a rosy glow towards the sky and becoming fixed in the shimmering colours of a thirsty rainbow.

'Give me water to drink,' His Majesty said to Ghulam, the watchman, imperiously.

'Huzoor,' said Ghulam from where he was cutting the leaves of a neem tree, 'I could give you water from the pitcher by the bed, but I am a Muhammadan and your mother. . . .'

'I shall take it myself,' said the child dropping the role of the king. And he helped himself to a tumblerful of water from the cool earthen pitcher that stood slender-necked under the shade.

'At Kerbala, son,' said Ghulam reflectively, 'on the battlefield of Kerbala, a whole army died of thirst. And there was enacted the tragedy of the martyrdom of Hassan and Husein. . . .'

'When was that, uncle?' the child asked.

'A long time ago,' said Ghulam. 'And yet not so long ago. . . .'

The child stared open-eyed and open-mouthed at Ghulam, the watchman, uncomprehending and yet vaguely aware of the catastrophe that had happened at Kerbala. Perhaps there was a well on which was a dispenser of water like the Brahmin on the well on the way to the temple in the bazaar, and he had refused to give water to Hassan and Husein because they were Muhammadans. And the plain that stretched on the left beyond the Persian wheel well became a battlefield where flames spluttered, and trumpets sounded, blood flowed and sorrowful cries ended in sighing syllables of choked mouths, and all eyes were filled with tears.

The force of the feeling, the intensity of the transfiguration stirred the depths below the child's phantom-chords and, with an involuntary twisting of his lower lip, he began to weep.

'What is the matter, son?' Ghulam said rushing up to him. 'Have I frightened you? . . . ' And he picked him up and swayed him from side to side to quieten him, even as he sang : 'You musn't get so frightened, my lion, so easily frightened. . . . Come, look, what is

there on the road? Ah, there is a man unyoking his bullock cart! And what has he got in his cart? Ah, ears of corn! . . . Come, let us see if he will give us some for you to roast.'

The singsong of Ghulam silenced the child and lifted the burden of centuries off his eyes and demolished the oppressive landscape of sad souls. And the promise of the gift of an ear of corn made the world a fragrant green again. He struggled out of the watchman's hands and ran eagerly to the side of the road where the bullock cart was drawn up.

The enormous wheels of the cart were dusty after the long journey and the oil on the axle had turned a slimy black. He stood by one of the wheels, with the finger of amazement in his mouth. How could such a monolithic wheel have been made? He had thought the same when he had been taken to see the enormous wooden wheels of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's gun Zam-Zama. And his mother had told him of the wheel of the giant car at Jagannath Puri which the gods had made. The carpenters must get very tired making those wheels. . . Or were they made by Gods, spirits, demons?

The child lifted his eyes to the torrid heavens and then to the earth beneath his feet, where began the depths of hell. And he gasped for a moment for fear of both the regions, as his mother had told him that the dead men and women go there to consort with the Gods above, if they had performed good deeds, and to be tortured in the nether world below, if they had done evil deeds. And he would have started on his imaginary journeyings if the bullock-cart driver had not come back, and called, 'Get away, child, get away, I am going to yoke the beasts to the cart again.'

'Will you let me get on it and drive the cart?' the child said.

The eyes of the peasant ogled him like two wild birds about to fly. And the man struck his tongue against the roof of his mouth to beckon the bullocks towards the harness. As the beasts objected to the imposition, the peasant shouted: 'May you die,

bullocks! Ohe, may your mother die!' The child edged away with a shudder.

'Don't be frightened, son, don't be frightened,' the peasant said softly, with a sucking sound of his lips. And then with the same magic phrase he coaxed the bullocks into obedience and harnessed them.

'Now you are going', the child said, looking up to the peasant from the edge of the road as the man sat on the shaft ready to move on.

'Yes, son,' the peasant answered, touched by the naivety of the baby voice.

'Where are you going?'

'Oh, on the road!'

'Where does the road go?'

'Now you are asking me a difficult question.' And the peasant scratched his head with mock perplexity and then said, 'I hear it leads to many strange lands, to Dilli.'

'Kurukshetra—where the Pandus fought the Kurus, as my mother says,' the child babbled knowingly.

'Han, but that was its name in the olden days, son; now it is called Dilli,' the peasant insisted with solid good sense.

'Does this road also lead to where Raja Rasalu went, the fairy-tale-forests and the kingdom of monkeys?'

At this the peasant was taken slightly off his guard. But he at once took the cue and transfigured his speech.

'Han, it leads to the seven cities of the fairies and then, across the seven seas, to the seven kingdoms of the white monkeys, beyond which, at the end of the antipodes, are the seven cold hells and seven warm heavens.'

'Can I go there with you?' said the child impetuously, impatiently. And he made towards the back of the cart.

'No, son, no. I am not going to those worlds,' said the peasant. 'I am only going as far as the market. You will go to all those places when you grow up to be a man.' And he honked the bullocks, dug his stick into their flesh and started off.

'I want to come with you, I want to,' the child cried and he ran dangerously alongside the bullock cart.

Pir Din, the gardener, rushed up and caught him in his arms.

The watchman ran and begged the gift of an ear of corn for him and put it in his hands.

The child kicked and screamed and protested that he wanted to go to the fairy-tale-forest, to the seven fairy cities and across the seven seas to the seven kingdoms of the white monkeys.

But his protests were of no avail. For the gardener handed him over to his mother who had come out on hearing his cries and stood by the door of her house.

The child cried himself to sleep because he could not go to the secret kingdom that lay at the end of the road. And when he came to, he murmured: 'I shall go to all those places when I grow up to be a man.'

His mother looked askance, but merely said: 'Wander, my son, wander, your legs are of wood and your head is of iron.'

The child merely showed her the ear of corn he had clutched tight in his hands all the while he had been asleep and said: 'Look, mother, what I have got.'

*Charles Harvey*

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## DANCING IN THE LIGHT OF GLOW-WORMS

THERE are a few fortunate people who can derive pleasure from a music score; there is a larger body who can give themselves—and sometimes others—pleasure by playing the works of the masters on piano or violin. But most of us require this interpretation to be made for us by a soloist or an orchestra who give us their version of the score; on occasions we even go a step further and welcome an interpreter of the inter-

preters, one who explains, so far as he can in words, what we should listen for in a Bach Partita or what we should not expect in a composition by Stravinsky. In literature, because we claim literacy, we appear to be less dependent on the interpreters. We can go through the motions of reading *The Tempest*; we can even claim to have enjoyed it because we know that it is 'good'; but we very seldom read it. We may have favourite writers, even among the classics, that we can honestly claim to have discovered ourselves. But most even of those who are inveterate readers are largely dependent on others, either to point out the merits of a hitherto neglected classic or to guide us, week by week or month by month, through the jungle of modern literature. I am not referring here to the critics who write primarily for scholars, collating texts, explaining obscurities and setting the author against his proper background. I am referring to that group of writers who, enjoying the beauties of literature themselves, have both the imagination and the technical skill to throw such a ray of light on *Tristram Shandy* that we determine to read the book, perhaps to reread it. Much of this interpretation, particularly of modern work, is given casually in conversation between friends; some of it comes in the columns of journals. But the least ephemeral, whatever its source, has, in common with the much advertised cleanser, a 'double action': it is like being taken for a walk by a friend who not only has the power of making even a well-known route seem new because you see the countryside through his eyes (and, of course, he has the topographical knowledge to take you a walk you have only heard of before), but who, over and above all this and apart altogether from the landscape, entrances you by his conversation; you are grateful for the ability he gives you to derive a deeper enjoyment when you do the same walk by yourself later on, but you are equally grateful for the richness of the talk which itself becomes a landscape that is worth enjoying and, perhaps, even worth pointing out to others. The ordinary reviewer may advise you to

take the turning to the right (or more likely to the left) past the farm and through the wood. The essayist with more imagination will point out the pattern of the roofs and the tracery of the trees against the sky. But you do not bother to return to these guides for confirmation either of direction or of aesthetic appreciation; what has been pointed out has become more important than the guide. The sort of man I am trying to portray is the interpreter who is remembered for himself, as Pachmann is remembered not merely as a player of Chopin but as an independent artist, a creator of beauty; the sort of writer about writers whose interpretation is creative, whose criticism is itself a work of art.

The argument of this first paragraph has taken the bit between its teeth and has led me into the offence of trying to press analogies too far, and perhaps even into hyperbole. But I am not going to rewrite it because it expresses, however inadequately, something of the debt we owe to those humble writers who are content to shine the limelight on others rather than to push themselves forward from the wings in the hope of attracting the attention of the audience, and who win the appreciation of the discriminating by the very skill with which they manipulate the lights. Amongst these illuminators Logan Pearsall Smith, one of 'those Americans who abandoned their country to lead idle and probably corrupt lives in foreign parts', must stand very high.

On the title page of *Reperusals and Re-Collections*, a volume of his essays published in 1936, he sets a quotation from Madame de Sévigné of whom he writes: 'So limpid is the sound of her voice, so lively her glance, so inextinguishable the spirit of life which sparkles and shines in her letters, that we find it hard to believe, what the incredible books tell us, that she died nearly two hundred and fifty years ago.' Pearsall Smith is still happily alive, though a man of eighty-one, and still writing. But my immediate point is that, through his writing, he must have given Madame de Sévigné if not a longer life at least a wider life in the

minds of those whom he has cajoled into reading—or, as they would like to have you think, rereading—her letters, from one of which he takes the following sentence to adorn his title page: 'Je me trouve fort bien d'être une substance qui pense et qui lit.' The pages that follow prove how apt the quotation is—as are all his quotations which fit naturally into the logic and even into the rhythm of the sentences where they occur; but my own feeling is that if Pearsall Smith instead of 'the amiable and industrious lady' had written that sentence, he would have transposed the words 'pense' and 'lit'. I do not wish to underestimate his power of thought but I do feel that it is his gift as a reader (leaving aside for the moment his ability, by writing, to share that gift with others) which distinguishes him from other men. For most of us, reading has to be sandwiched in between other activities and occupations, and we so often come to it with our eyes and minds tired that we miss most of what reading can give us. There are so many things that *have* to be read in the course of the day—newspapers and letters and memoranda and school exercises—that our sensitiveness to language, as an instrument of great delicacy for arousing emotion or expressing an exact shade of meaning, is blunted. If the sense is in the main clear, if there is no outrageous flouting of the laws of grammar and syntax, we read on, page after page, and then put a book mark in to save ourselves the misfortune of reading over again tomorrow what we imagined we read tonight. But to Pearsall Smith the use of language has always been important and, for most of his life, a skill to be treated with the greatest respect whether he himself is using it or whether he is trying to extract the last drop of meaning or of beauty from the use of it by others. (I am assuming, from his writing, that his approach is the same in conversation.) His father and mother were preachers of the 'Higher Life' Movement whose words, on both sides of the Atlantic, stirred hundreds of thousands of sinners to reconsider their ways of life. 'Little Logan' must have early been impressed by the

effects that can be achieved by words if they are used in an appropriate manner; and even though he was himself converted to a better way of life by the joint eloquence of his elder sister and one of her friends (an occurrence which his father worked up into a tract that sold in enormous quantities) he must often, in his adolescent years, have shuddered at the way in which language was misused for ends which, even then, he did not believe to be worthy. He traces his love of words further back still to a Quaker ancestress, Ann Whitall, who, in the second half of the eighteenth century, was so bewitched by words that when she had not much of her own to record in her journal, no reflection like 'O I thinks, cud my ies run down with tears all ways', she copies out some cheerful denunciation from Jeremiah or the Psalms, often, her descendent suspects, because the sheer beauty of the words appealed to her even more than the promise of damnation for sinners.

If heredity gave him the inclination to love words, heredity also gave him the opportunity to study and enjoy them, not like us in his spare time but all day and every day. In *Unforgotten Years* he describes, with his usual sly humour, the stages by which he came to the decision that making a fortune selling glass bottles was not the best thing in life ('Go and live at Monte Carlo and enjoy thyself' was the advice of his cousin, an elderly female Quaker) and how his mother persuaded his father to allow Logan 'to play the fool' by giving him \$25,000. This 'carried me through Oxford; it enabled me to spend years in Paris, in Italy, and in an old house in Sussex. I lived on it, in fact, very happily, for nearly thirty years;' and it enabled him to indulge in 'the nice and subtle happiness of reading . . . this joy not dulled by Age, this polite and unpunished vice, this selfish, serene, life-long intoxication.' As one of his 'Afterthoughts' he writes: 'People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading.'

In addition to providing him with the joy and the business of his own life, his reading led to three



different but interdependent manifestations by means of which he has tried to add to the joy of others. He is an inveterate anthologizer—'a dainty occupation for a person of leisure and literary tastes'—and he has published two collections of his garnerings from English Literature, *A Treasury of English Prose* and *A Treasury of English Aphorisms*, and one collection from the works of George Santayana. I suspect that he has scores of note-books in which he has recorded the sentences that, in his reading, caught his penetrating eye or made unheard music for his subtle ear. These anthologies must in the course of time have led him to critical writing as well as critical thinking, and from this we have books on Donne, Jeremy Taylor and Sir Henry Wotton, one of the most enjoyable books ever written about Shakespeare, a spirited defence of Milton against the denigrations of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and the Cambridge critics ('I like to dance in the light of glow-worms, but the earnest and hastily-written books of our modern authors are of no interest to me. So I suppose I am an old fogey, after all.'), and a collection of essays which he has called *Reperusals and Re-Collections*. The third manifestation is concerned with the detailed study of language. For many years he was the secretary of the Society for Pure English and he wrote a number of the Society's Pamphlets, notably on English Idioms. In addition, he has published books on *The English Language* and *Words and Idioms*.

If he had remained only a reader he would have been known solely to a small group of friends, booksellers and librarians; until he became a writer who published his work the ordinary man, any 'one of the unpraised, unrewarded millions without whom Statistics would be a bankrupt science', would never have known of him and would never have benefited from his gift as an interpreter—as a guide who has the power to revivify an old walk, to suggest new ones, to point out fresh beauties in the broad sweep of familiar downs and, without harsh change of attitude or language, to analyse

the form of a flower or describe the significance of a fossil. It is likely that his own appreciation of and love for the broad general effects came first and that only over a long period of years did he acquire the interest in and knowledge of the tiny particles which go to make up the whole. It is likely also that his anthologizing led him, by frequent rereading and comparison, to the point where he felt himself capable of writing an evaluation of another writer, though in fairly general terms. Finally, his method leads, logically and almost inevitably, to his work as a 'vocabularist', one who collects and studies the raw material of writing and gives the results of his labours for the use of fellow craftsmen. But though these three activities appear to have developed in this temporal order, I am sure that they have long been practised side by side, each enriching the other two; I cannot imagine Pearsall Smith failing to write some sentences from another writer in his note-book so long as he can hold a pen, to make some effort to evaluate the work of any author he happens to be reading so long as he is able to think, and to verify the origin of some new word so long as he has the strength to handle the Oxford Dictionary.

Of his Anthologies it is not necessary to say more than that they prove the width of his reading and his refusal to be dictated to by popular prejudices in favour of or against a writer. It is conceivable that a less gifted man, by a combination of industry and good fortune, might have produced an anthology as representative and as enjoyable as *A Treasury of English Prose*; but I am sure that no man has combined the two qualities necessary for the compilation of *English Aphorisms*—prolonged interest in this form of writing and sureness in detecting the jewel however buried it may be in a paragraph—to anything like the same extent as Pearsall Smith. Mushrooms are easy to recognize when they are pointed out by the expert, though most of us would find it difficult always to tell the inedible from the edible; and when we have recovered our natural

resentment against the expert for the apparent ease with which he collects a basketful of delicious 'flaps' in the time it has taken us to gather a handful of 'buttons', a 'flap' that someone else has discarded and two or three long-stalked toad stools, we enjoy the feast almost as much as if we had provided it all ourselves.

The record of his gifts of interpretation to us, though presented in a form (the critical essay) which many writers have used with brilliant effect, is equally stamped with his personality. In writing in general terms of Aphorisms—one of his finest essays—he uses the minting of coins as a metaphor with telling completeness. Not only, he says, should the metal of the thought be good and current but the outline of the stamp must be sharp and individual. So it is with *his* essays; we feel confident as soon as we start reading that he knows what he is writing about, that he has all the necessary evidence to his hand and that he will not keep us waiting while he hunts for the exact reference. Only by quotation can the individuality of his style be demonstrated, and before this essay of mine is done there will be enough of Logan Pearsall Smith's sentences between inverted commas (and I hope not too many half remembered and palmed off as my own) for the industrious reader to decide whether or not he agrees with me. The following are the first sentences from four of the essays in *Reperusals and Re-Collections* which I give partly to suggest the confidence that one feels in starting on one of these 'literary pilgrimages' with the writer, partly to exemplify his command of clear and rhythmical language (which, by his own confession, he has only achieved through constant practice), and partly to give a hint of their 'Pearsall-smithishness'.

In travelling across France the train sometimes passes a formal park, through which a great avenue, opening its vista for a second, reveals the mansard roofs and the façade of some seventeenth-century château; and in the imagination of the traveller this momentary glimpse will awaken the thoughts of the most famous age of French history.—

the reign, so glorious in arts and arms, of the Great Monarch. ('Madame de Sévigné in the Country')

Age, I find, fosters the finer feelings ; and as mine have grown with the years more romantic, and, if you like (I don't dislike it myself), more sentimental, I have fallen into the way of making sentimental journeys every now and then to the homes of one or another of the authors whose books I like to read again. ('Pilgrimages')

I went to Sevenoaks the other day to see a doctor. As the purpose of my visit was not medical but moral, it was of little importance that Dr. Fuller died more than two hundred years ago at the age of eighty. ('A Visit to Sevenoaks')

Every now and then, when the earth has swung a billion miles or so round the ellipsis of its orbit, I sit down upon the unsteady planet and read through all Jane Austen's novels. ('Jane Austen')

Many other writers can take us by the hand with the same confidence of being followed wherever they lead ; a rather smaller number have so worked at their writing that they have achieved similarly effective rhythms and harmonies ; but no one has combined these two in exactly the same way as Pearsall Smith has, or as Sterne and Lamb and Pater have in *their* completely individual ways. To say that the thought and the language of a writer run well together in harness is to say that his style is 'good'—a high enough ambition for most of us, who find the driving of one horse difficult. But our fullest admiration must be reserved for those who, by nature and practice, are able to manage a three-in-hand. I shall return to 'Pearsallsmithishness' later.

'I have attempted in most of the essays to define and illuminate the lasting sources of pleasure which make for me the enduring merit of writers like Montaigne, Madame de Sévigné, Sainte-Beuve and Jane Austen.' This is Pearsall Smith writing about *Reperusals and Re-Collections*. Let me impertinently try, as an interpreter of an interpreter (and taking a part as representing a cross-section of the whole), to make you want to read his essay on Montaigne, which I am sure you have never read, as much as this essay made me want to read—or dare I say reread?—Montaigne.

The clue lies, I think, in his solution of a similar problem. His essay on Sainte-Beuve, in which a humble critic is writing of an acknowledged master, is built up round two metaphors, sorcery and painting, the vocabularies of which appear from time to time in order to clinch an argument. Words like 'touchstones', 'crucibles', 'laboratory', and 'pigments', 'canvas', 'portraits', 'gallery', are used not only to create the impression that Sainte-Beuve was at once a wizard and a painter (and in this way to fulfil the normal functions of metaphors) but also to suggest by the concatenation of these two particular metaphors that the writer himself has said much more than is contained in the words used, as a magician mixes two ingredients and creates a third or as a painter, by means of patches of pure colour (which on close inspection appear to have no arrangement), creates a pattern which, looked at from the correct distance, appears as the head of a girl. There is even a third set of metaphors suggesting human relationships which is used with shock tactics. 'Falling blindly in love with his subject, adoring and embracing it' is Pearsall Smith's vivid way of suggesting Sainte-Beuve's initial and essential first enthusiasm; and 'his power of forming relations of friendship with the illustrious shades . . . gives to his canvasses a beauty and a kind of pathos not unlike that of some of Van Dyck's portraits'.

Let me now try and apply these lessons in elucidating the appeal of the essay on Montaigne. It is quite short—not more than about 3,000 words—and starts with a section on the charm of rereading (how many of us refuse, almost as a matter of principle, to read a book a second time; these are the people who use book marks!) old favourites, 'love at first sight being followed by love at second or third or fourth sight' leading to 'the bliss of both the constant and the inconstant lover'; and the further discovery that so often first impressions are confirmed and even enhanced by later perusal. 'These discoveries in old books of new beauties and aspects of interest may persuade us, there-

fore, that we are not only still ourselves, but more ourselves than ever : that our spirit has not only persisted in its being, but has become more lucid in the process ; that the observatory or palace it has edified for its habitation, though always falling out of repair in places, one wing collapsing after another, is yet being always rebuilt on a more consistent plan, and with bigger windows. I flatter myself therefore with the notion, that if anyone pays me a call, though I may be out for the day on some foolish errand, yet, as Montaigne says of himself, I am never really far from home.' Already he has established such friendly confidence in my mind that I am ready to accept as true anything he says later. If he were to suggest that there are hitherto unnoticed beauties in the work of Ella Wheeler Wilcox I should be ready to revise my opinion, though probably without taking the trouble to test my judgment against his. (And herein lies one of the dangers—perhaps the only danger—in reading such essays : one is inclined to accept the essays themselves as sufficient substitutes for the writings on which they are based. Pearsall Smith has a charming account of the two virtuous and imaginative ladies who wrote the works of Michael Field. Having read this essay and having never had a very strong disposition towards the poems I shall probably rest content with the opinions expressed in the essay ; so personal are these, so gently malicious and so persuasive that full justice has never been done to these ladies.)

Having then established himself in our eyes as a reliable guide he goes on to show that he and Montaigne are friends, that they both have poor memories (does that not win your heart also ?), that they are both detached and disinterestedly curious, both conscious of the weaknesses of human nature, both, above all, interested in observing themselves and recording the results. For Montaigne 'threw off his clothes and took himself to pieces in public' and then published the results so that others should have the benefit of his observation and courage. Pearsall Smith

is our friend; Montaigne is his; therefore Montaigne should be, or at least stands a chance of being, ours. A short analysis of how Montaigne only developed complete objectivity in his records of himself as he grew older and learned to make a note of the slightest physical or mental habit; a short explanation of why Montaigne published such a very personal set of documents and why critics in previous centuries have dubbed him 'a sceptic and a cynical scoffer'; a deft quotation or two and the essay is fittingly concluded in Montaigne's own words: 'And sit we upon the highest throne of the world, yet sit we only on our own tails.' The only thing for me to do was to buy the three volumes of the *Essays* in the Everyman Library. This I did, and I have already started, with the third volume as he recommends, reading—or was it rereading?—them.

In a footnote to an account of the founding of the Society for Pure English by Robert Bridges he explains that 'the title was deliberately adopted to protest against current notions of purity in language, and to suggest, ironically and perhaps too subtly, the great linguistic truth to purists that in their discriminations and denunciations they are almost always wrong.' I do not know how much good the Society, with its too subtle name, has been able to do but there is a store of accurate and fascinating information on aspects of syntax and grammar, on spelling, on pronunciation, on words borrowed from other languages, on the derivation of words and on changes in verbal fashion. In addition to a pamphlet on English Idioms, an invaluable classification and the work of, perhaps, thirty years, Pearsall Smith's chief thesis has been that, in the past, our ancestors, following in the footsteps of the creative word-users, have never hesitated to take a needed word either from the vocabularies of those whose English is not recognized as Standard or from foreign languages—and having taken these words to give them English clothing and treat them as members of the family; but that now we tend to keep them as intruders, apologize

for their presence, dress them in Italics or inverted commas, create difficulties of spelling and pronunciation and draw attention to these very gaps in our language. The full value of this facet of Pearsall Smith's work can only be assessed by scholars, but his writings on it can be enjoyed by anyone who has a feeling and a respect for the English language, because he so obviously enjoys himself when he can add a hitherto neglected idiom to his list of those which crept into everyday speech from the kitchen or when he is pleading for the reintroduction of the word 'Poesy' to describe writing which is poetical in character though not metrical in form, or when, for fun, he invents the word 'milver' to describe those who share a fad.

What I like in a good author is not what he says, but what he whispers. I should like to have written that sentence because it suggests so vividly what I feel about all the writing of Logan Pearsall Smith and particularly what I feel about *All Trivia*, a book that I have purposely not mentioned so far but kept as a *bonne bouche* for the end. An unfortunate habit has grown up of making a sharp division between what is descriptive or critical writing and what is creative, literary essays being automatically included in the first category and novels, short stories and poetry in the second. According to this differentiation Pearsall Smith would not be regarded as a creative writer except for a volume of short stories about Oxford published in 1895 and two small volumes of poetry published about a dozen years later. I myself have perhaps over-emphasized the critical side of his work in my attempt to shew his value to us as an interpreter, but I hope I have not at the same time failed to reveal the essentially creative character of his approach to other writers. *All Trivia*, too, could be described as a work of criticism—criticism of himself and of us all; but if ever there were a really creative book, here it is. It fits into no neat category for purposes of classification, and even its history is unique. Part of it was privately published in Italy by the Berensons in 1897 and most of the section now



labelled 'Trivia' was published in England by the author in 1902; 'perhaps thirty copies were sold'. In 1918 a commercial publisher, Constable, undertook the risk of publishing *Trivia* and they can seldom have regretted a decision less. *More Trivia* appeared in 1922, *Afterthoughts* in 1931 and *Last Words* in 1933; together these make up *All Trivia*. One of the most interesting commentaries on the book is that it has been even more popular in France than it has in England.

'These pieces of moral prose', as the author dubs them, vary in length from six words to six pages and are easily contained in 175 well spaced pages. Robert Bridges described them as making the most immoral book in the world though every word could be read in any drawing room. Santayana wrote: 'The whole makes a picture of the self-consciousness of the modern man which is not only delightfully vivid and humorous, but a document of importance as well.' I can only say that they are always wise and sometimes a shade malicious, and are written in prose which is always exactly suited to the author's purpose—coins, not of precious but of friendly serviceable metal, bearing clearly on obverse and reverse the stamp of the minter.

I have already tried to give you some idea of Pearsall Smith's use of metaphor, of his feeling of full enjoyment in whatever he is writing, of his unassertive scholarship. You may also have noticed his accuracy and originality in the use of adjectives but let me add a few which succeed in adding to a store that one might have thought already overfull: 'great rotating sun', 'kind and famous sunshine', 'decorative sunshine', 'didactic sun'; and yet he could write with almost startling honesty, 'Thank heavens, the sun has gone in, and I don't have to go out and enjoy it.' How just right is that very ordinary expression 'Thank heavens'.

But there are still two aspects of his writing which are not only delightful in themselves but vividly revealing of the writer. The first, the ability to laugh at himself, is shared of course with some of the greatest

writers but, in the way it is employed, is completely individual. I can only illustrate this by quoting 'Ebury Street' in full.

'Do you mean to cut me? How odd you look! What are you doing in Ebury Street?' she asked.

I felt a large healthy blush suffuse my features. 'There's a lady who lives here—no, I don't mean what you think—a lady,' I said desperately, 'a Mrs. Whigham, who hates the way I write, and threw my last book out of the window. I walk by her house now and then to practise humility, and learn—as we all should learn—to endure the world's contempt.'

This Mrs. Whigham was, however, an invented being; I had really come to Ebury Street for another look, in the window of a shop there, at an old Venetian mirror, in whose depths of dusky glass I had seen a dim, romantic, well-dressed figure, as I went by one day.

The other is a controlled use of bathos, to which I know no parallel. 'So I never lose a sense of the whimsical and perilous chance of daily life, with its meetings and wondrous accidents. Why, today, perhaps, or next week, I may hear a voice, and, packing up my Gladstone bag, follow it to the ends of the earth.' The introduction of the Gladstone bag is a delicious and obvious shock; but there are minor shocks in the doubt of what will be followed to the ends of the earth and in the mundane phrase 'next week'. Here is another example: 'I, who move and breathe and place one foot before the other, who watch the Moon wax and wane, and put off answering my letters. . . .'. But is it right to label as bathos such an enrichment to the description of *Homo Sapiens*?

My favourite—at least it is my favourite today, though it has not always been and it may be ousted from its place tomorrow—my present favourite is an early jewel called 'Providence'.

But God sees me; He knows my beautiful nature, and how pure I keep amid all sorts of quite horrible temptations. And that is why, as I feel in my bones, there is a special Providence watching over me; an Angel sent

expressly from heaven to guide my footsteps from harm. For I never trip up or fall downstairs like other people; I am not run over by cabs and buses at street-crossings; in the worst wind my hat never blows off. And if ever any of the great cosmic processes or powers threaten me, I believe that God sees it: 'Stop it!' He shouts from his ineffable throne, 'Don't you touch my Chosen One, my Pet Lamb, my Beloved. Leave him alone, I tell you!'

But on *All Trivia* it is really impossible to exercise the art of the anthologist; if any is quotable it is all quotable. We shall now, I suppose, see no new *Trivia*; we ought to be satisfied with the richness of the store we have already. But I do not think it would be unfair to ask for a continuation of the autobiography begun in *Unforgotten Years* and a promise that the public will be allowed an edition of Logan Pearsall Smith's letters, a tantalizing smell of which recently appeared in *Orion*. With these and with what has already been published 'that quaint people we call Posterity, whom I, like other great writers, claim as my readers—urging them to hurry up and get born, that they may have the pleasure of reading *Trivia*,' should be well satisfied.

